

# **JOURNAL OF KARNATAKA STUDIES**

**1**

**NOVEMBER 2003 - APRIL 2004**



# **JOURNAL OF KARNATAKA STUDIES**

(bi - annual)

## **Editor**

Vijay Poonacha Thambanda

Department of History, Kannada University, Hampi

## **Editorial Board**

K.V. Narayana, Department of Kannada Language Studies, Kannada University, Hampi

J.S.Sadananda, Department of Political Science, Kuvempu University, Shimogga

M. Madhava Prasad, Central Institute of English and Foreign languages, Hyderabad

H. Pattabhiraama Somayaji, Department of English, Mangalore University College, Mangalore

Nataraj Huliyaar, Department of Kannada, Bangalore University, Bangalore

**Subscriptions:** Regular institutional rate is Rs. 250, 25 pounds and 40 dollars. Individuals may subscribe at a one-year rate of Rs.100, 12 pounds and 20 dollars. Orders of the subscription should be sent to the Fianance Officer, Prasaraanga, Kannada University, Hampi, Vidyaaranya, Bellary District, Karnataka, India- 583 276 either by cash, demand draft, money order and banker's cheque.

Published by Dr. H. C. Boralingaiah, Director, Prasaraanga, Kannada University, Hampi, Vidyaaranya, Karnataka, India 583 276

© Kannada University, Hampi, 2003

[www.kavihampi.org](http://www.kavihampi.org)

Printed at Ravi Graphics, Bangalore, India

# **JOURNAL OF KARNATAKA STUDIES**

**No.1**

**November 2003 - April 2004**

## **Contents**

<b>Preface</b>	iii - v
Dr. H. J. Lakkappa Gouda, Vice-Chancellor of Kannada University, Hampi	
<b>Editorial</b>	vi - vii
<b>A Note on the Theme - Kannada Identity</b>	viii - xiv
M. Madhava Prasad, Guest Editor	
<b>Comments</b>	1 - 4
Australia, Modernity and Karnataka- Random reflections of an Incorrigible old Bandicoot K. Ragavendra Rao	
<b>Articles</b>	
Translating Nationalism: Politics of Languages and Community V.B.Tharakeshwar	5 - 59
Cinema as a site of Nationalist Identity Politics in Karnataka M. Madhava Prasad	60 - 85
<b>General Articles</b>	
Dynamics of Sectarian Formations: Saivism in Medieval Karnataka Rajarama Heggade	86 - 112
Unheard Voices: Narratives by Dalit Women Shyilaja Venugopal	113 - 128
<b>Policy</b>	
Selling Education to Save it Sudha Seetharaman	129 - 144
<b>Translation</b>	
The Nature of Kannada Nationalism - D. R. Nagaraj (Translation. M. Madhava Prasad)	145 - 156
<b>Book Reviews</b>	
K. Raghvendra Rao's <i>Imagining Unimaginable communities</i> Ramesh Bayari	157 - 167







## **Preface**

**Dr. H. J. Lakkappa Gouda**

**Vice-Chancellor**

Karnataka is a distinct land of multiple cultures, many facets, a rich variety of resources/resourcefulness, with its numerous achievements and potentials. In it one notices thousands of mythologically and historically significant signs and traces. Vedas, Upanishads, and the Bhagavadgita were born here with their universalist explorations into life and life-sustaining thought. It has been the playfield of the brave who fought for people's welfare and the motherland unmindful of a fear for life. During the modern period too, it has been on the path of progress in the varied realms of experiments in language, education, community welfare, knowledge and science, and in the creative and meaningful experiments in democracy. For this very reason, it has a unique place in integral India. However, it is neither bogged down by the myths of the past nor has it lost its identity in the on-rush of modernity. It has been constantly striving for a bright future by holding on to traditional as well as most modern thought and activism, in the midst of many odds. To grasp, in all its aspects, the variety and complexity of this land and to present it to the non-Kannada world with evidence as well as concern is the urgent need of the present. At a time when our selfhood is being crushed under the mighty Western feet, it is time for us to preserve and to present to the outside world our uniqueness, without falling prey to either hesitation or to an inferiority complex. But to present the distinctiveness of our land in all its aspects requires that we have a comprehensive awareness of its range and essence, its past and its



potential. We need to give up our excessive pride and to the dispassionately reflect the reality of Karnataka's genuine achievements in order that the others understand and appreciate it; this requires that we are familiar with Karnataka's achievements and greatness in all their facets. It is important that bureaucrats and scholars who migrate to other states and nations, and vice versa, familiarise themselves with the greatness of this land. Those who migrate from here and know nothing of our culture or our achievements are as callous and wooden as those who stay on for decades in this land for reasons of profession, education etc., and are unconcerned about its culture, literature, history or society; both, simultaneously betray their land as well as themselves. Therefore, Kannada University has taken up the task of remedying this deficient self-knowledge by publishing articles and books that examine and assert the great highlights of Karnataka.

Our University has designed and has sought to popularize a diploma course in the distance education mode called "Karnataka Studies," against the above mentioned background, and has sought to extend the range of awareness about Karnataka through a variety of related programmes. It is in this context that this scholarly journal called *Journal of Karnataka Studies* is being published with a view to introducing through English the distinctness and greatness of Karnataka to outsiders who could not read, write or understand Kannada; thus, this journal hopes to allow outsiders and other language-communities to gain entry into the heart of Karnataka.

Attempts have been made to reflect the unique facets of Karnataka through writings that contain profound thought and scholarship, in this inaugural issue of the journal. These writings center around the theme of "Kannada Identity," and present the problems concerning the dissemination of nationality in relation to language-politics and community. Dr. M. Madhava Prasad, with his deep and extensive study, has brought into the focus of debate many significant issues concerning the assumptions and range of the central theme. Australia/Karnataka and Modernity, Film as the political tool of nationalist uniqueness in Karnataka, Reflections



on the debates engendered by the Shaiva philosophy of medieval Karnataka, Unheard voices of a village, Education on sale, the nature of Kannada nationality, and a review of one of our University's English publications *Imagining Unimaginable Communities*- are some of the areas covered by the inaugural issue of the journal. These writings analyse Karnataka's methods of thought and action, and consider their distinctness from other societies; these are powerful enough to provide new directions to those who intend to understand the inmost core of Karnataka. The scholar-contributors of these writings are widely known experts with a creative grasp, analysis and judgment of their own. The traditional methods of deriving a thrill from extolling the superficial aspects of Karnataka geography and history have not only been abandoned here, but new debates about Karnataka, about ways of designing new methods of comprehending such debates through serious scholarship, and critical theories based on wide reading and experience- have also been introduced here. Any one who studies these pages is sure to grasp the ever-fresh achievements of Karnataka, and the outlook towards life propagated by it, through time. The question concerning Karnataka identity has been examined through a variety of perspectives by the scholar-contributors here, and in modes of expression specific to each. It is my wish that our English journal does and must become a meaningful bridge between the Kannada and non-Kannada worlds.

A good care has been taken of my wish. Our University is thankful to the scholars who have provided creative support to our university's new venture through their writings, to our university's enthusiastic scholar Dr. T. Vijay Poonacha who organizes this, and to all the scholars of the editorial team. I wish that the forthcoming issues of the journal continue to powerfully reflect the numerous aspects of our land, and to sow the seeds of meaningful debates with the non-Kannadigas.



## Editorial

Kannada University, Hampi, Karnataka, was established in 1991 with the aspiration of conducting research in the humanities, the social sciences, the fine arts and in some of the aspects of the natural sciences. Unlike the other universities that cater to the needs of a specific region, Kannada University is not constrained by any regional jurisdiction. It aims to bridge such a regional gap both by producing such knowledge in Kannada and also by making available the knowledge produced in other languages, to Kannadigas as well as non-Kannadigas.

Our University, therefore, proposes to address a long felt, unspelt academic need by launching a bi-annual cultural studies journal in English, entitled *Journal of Karnataka Studies* on Kannada and Karnataka. It is a need that conceived to act as a forum for fruitful interaction among scholars in this field a need that has often been noticed by the engaged academic community as an embarrassing lacuna. This journal hopes to be a forum for Kannada/Karnataka Studies so as to encourage and enrich interactive research and scholarship among scholars and students of Kannada and Karnataka studies working in Kannada, English and the other languages. It is my pleasure to introduce this journal with a view to forthcoming academic debates and interactions among scholars who are engaged in research on the different aspects of Kannada and its economy, polity, natural resources, environment, media, nationalism, history, language, culture and other similar issues. Each issue of the journal will bring to focus, among other things, a specific theme: the first issue of the journal will centre primarily around the theme of "Kannada identity."

Kannada University, from its very beginning, has been trying to focus on issues like the identity of Kannada, and Karnataka with a variety of perspectives. Most of the time, it was looked upon as an



expression by an insider rather than as a thematic observation made at the charismatic seminars in the metropolitan universities of India. Surprisingly, a language spoken by more than six crores of people could not establish strong feelings of “oneness” despite the efforts of the leading Kannada organisations irrespective of their ideological commitments. Also, the voices of these organizations did not contribute much to a strong dialogue either with the State or with the intellectuals. The dialogues initiated by the intellectuals as well as these organizations did not work together as in the case of the identity politics in some of the languages of India during the post-colonial period. . The inaugural issue of our journal makes an effort to discuss some of the issues around “Kannada identity” along with offering some other research articles.

It is no coincidence that this journal should appear at a juncture when linguistic identities are emerging to share greater powers with the central government whose politics, however, revolves around the politics of Delhi. Fighting against British imperialism in the name of “Indian Nationalism” was an inevitable strategy for the freedom fighters during the Indian national movement. The idea of the formation of a “Union Government of India” with the spirit of Indian nationalism was accepted by most of the intellectuals as well as political parties. It was thought that the “local/regional” aspirations of the sub-continent would get addressed during the “nation building” process. Unfortunately, the experiment of the last fifty-six years did not go in the expected directions. Consequently, we see a large number of identity movements throughout India during the last twenty years. For researchers, this is the best time to re-think the definitions of nationalism and identity in the changed political scenario, where in one sees the aspirations of linguistic groups, tribals, OBCs, dalits, and other similar groups craving for a greater autonomy and liberty (in some cases “independence”) from Delhi-centred power-politics. Against this background, the first issue makes an attempt to address some of the issues around “Kannada identity,” as well as other related subjects. I certainly hope that the efforts of our university and the distinguished editorial team will fulfill the academic interests of the students, teachers and researchers.

**Editor**



## A Note on the Theme

**M. Madhavaprasad\***

**Guest Editor**

Identity looms large in today's world as both a threat to human progress and a refuge from it. In the twentieth century, the struggles of colonized peoples for independence or national self-determination were regarded as struggles in the cause of human emancipation, freedom and equality. It was felt that the achievement of independence by a people subjugated by foreign rule was not a matter of their future alone, but also the future of humanity as a whole. The 'right of nations to self-determination' was seen as a progressive slogan of the democratic revolution that was sweeping the globe, indeed a necessary condition of the fulfillment of the promise of universal freedom and equality.

Today, however, struggles of a very similar nature are known as struggles for identity, not struggles for political autonomy. Neither the supporters of these struggles nor the detractors seem to associate them any longer with universal human aspirations. Opponents regard such struggles as backward looking, an unfortunate pathological side effect of the integration of the world into one 'global village,' the coming together of humanity in one harmonious blend of colours and cultures, pleasures and progress. On this view, identity struggles are isolated manifestations of pathological maladjustment to the new reality, for the correction

---

\* Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages,  
Hyderabad- 500 007



of which there now exists an elaborate geopolitical pharmacology.

What has intervened since the high tide of nationalist aspirations is globalization, a new logic of global integration, which seeks to supersede the *inter-nationalism* of the earlier era. From the perspective of globalization's triumphant march, questions of national identity seem like trivial distractions, and it is no wonder then that the preferred meaning of 'identity' is a sense of cultural belonging, an identification that brings solace to the individual caught up in the rush to globalization.

But globality is not the same as universality. We should question globalization's claim that its mode of unifying the world approximates to humanity's vision of universal freedom and equality. Nothing, on current evidence, could be farther from the truth. For globalization is nothing but a strategy of capitalism designed to profit from, rather than dismantle, the system of nation-states and their uneven economic growth.

On the other hand, it is also true that contemporary 'identity politics' deserves that label because it is a politics that is no longer associated with the universalist goals of freedom and equality. On the contrary, most identitarian campaigns constitute a neat complement to globalization in seeming to insist only on the preservation of the concrete particulars of group identity. In short, in the era of globalization, questions of identity have become depoliticised and frequently pathologised. In its purely cultural aspect, identity is widely celebrated as a value in itself, and becomes available for commodification as long as politics is kept out of the picture.

\*\*\*

Literary scholars have argued that a linguistic national identity for the Kannada speaking region was imagined more than a thousand years ago, in *Kavirajamarga*. This classic work of prosody has attracted renewed attention in recent years for its astonishingly modern conception of the relation between language, people and territory. But questions of national identity in the strictly contemporary sense of the term can be traced to the colonial era.



We can identify broadly four different phases of the elaboration of Kannada national identity:

1. Kannada and colonialism: The construction of a literary canon, the production of modern grammars and lexicons, all initially under the aegis of missionaries and colonial officers motivated by religious propaganda and administrative concerns respectively. It is well known that most of the modern Indian languages were forged in similar circumstances by a combination of European and Indian scholars. In his meticulously detailed account of this epic undertaking in regard to Kannada, V. B. Tharakeshwar shows how a literary canon was constituted by re-situating religious texts within an aesthetic framework, how the labours of different scholars, Indian and European, often unknown to each other, contributed to the grammars and dictionaries as well as the printed form of the language. Coming in the wake of all the frenetic philological labour, in this era we also encounter B.M.Sri's eagerness to modernize the language and to absorb into the language all the literary and knowledge resources of the modern West. B.M.Sri worked with a modernizing paradigm that seems to have lost its appeal subsequently.

2. Kannada and Indian nationalism: Secondly, we encounter Kannada nationalism under the aegis of Indian nationalism, in the era when the different languages of India, adopting the Bengali or Marathi model, tried to consolidate their identities through reconstructions of the histories of the respective regions. This is also the era of a sustained literary movement, and most of the great names in modern Kannada literature belong to this era. We could also say that in this phase, it is literature that is the pre-eminent site of elaboration of a Kannada identity, not as *content*, but in the form of a modern Kannada reading public that arose with the emergence of a print culture. The spread of print culture through newspapers and magazines further contributes to the consolidation of this Kannada public. This is however, for all its strengths, limited in numbers to the relatively small literate class. An emblematic text of this phase is undoubtedly Alur Venkatrao's *Karnataka Gatha Vaibhava*, which gives the linguistic region its own national history,



and repeats the formula of Indian nationalist historiography that posited a Golden Age before the advent of Muslim rule. Indeed, in this phase, we see that Kannada national identity, like the national identities of other linguistic regions, is constructed on the model of Indian national identity or located within a national framework. The epic novels of Kuvempu are exemplary in this regard, for they present extraordinarily dense narratives set in the Malnad region of Karnataka, but against the horizon of a nationalist politics where Vivekananda's refashioning of Hinduism as a modern religion is one of the constituent cultural factors. D. R. Nagaraj's essay on the character of Kannada nationalism, published here in translation, harks back to Alur Venkatrao as a point of comparison for the more recent and more strident assertions of Kannada identity in the activist writings of Dr. Chidanandamurthy. Whether one agrees with Nagaraj's point or not, it is clear that the circumstances under which these two expressions of nationalism arose are very different. One of the most important differences is that today the national horizon is much more strongly Hindu than it was during the freedom struggle.

3. Kannada and the modern Indian nation-state: This brings us to the third important phase in the articulation of Kannada identity, for which the formation of a unified Mysore state in 1956 is the turning point. The most important development in this phase is the rise of a modern popular culture, going beyond the literary culture restricted to upper caste/ class readers, and drawing the illiterate masses too into a cultural ideology that was most systematically elaborated in the popular cinema. In more recent times, we have seen a significant spread of literacy among the people, especially in urban areas, reflected in the rise of mass circulation tabloids whose editors aspire to be cultural, if not political, leaders in their own right. But it is the role of cinema since the 1950s in constructing a more inclusive Kannada national identity that is the definitive feature of this post-unification period. One of the most fascinating aspects of this history is the rise of Rajkumar to the status of unchallenged superstar. During the crisis engendered recently by his abduction by the smuggler



Veerappan, we saw how powerful his visage is, as a symbol of cultural filiation and loyalty to the cause of Kannada identity. However, the early days of Rajkumar's rise to pre-eminence as a point of *symbolic identification* for the people of Karnataka has not attracted much scholarly attention, in part because the study of popular culture continues to be regarded as an embarrassing, if not a wasteful undertaking. My own essay on some aspects of the rise of Rajkumar as a figure of political representation makes a beginning towards a more systematic study of popular culture in Karnataka, which includes not only cinema, but also the radio, television, popular print media and popular literary forms, as well as the more conventional elements of popular culture like folk culture and professional theatre. Kannada identity as it obtains today combines symbolic elements - a literary culture, a culturally evolved logic of political representation - as well as fetishistic, iconic modes of identification as exemplified in the incarnation of the language as a goddess, and the transformation of the great figures of the land into authoritative icons.

4. Kannada and globalization: Which brings us finally to the present. Popular Kannada films have already announced the advent of globalization. The Kannadiga abroad features more and more prominently in the Kannada cultural imaginary, and it is fitting that Prof. Raghavendra Rao's random musings on Kannada identity should be prompted by a visit to Australia. The most important feature of this current conjuncture is the process of comprehensive commodification of cultural identity. In the last decade or so, we have witnessed Kannada identity politics taking on an extremely aggressive tonality, participating in a majoritarian ideology that is sometimes linguistic (thus identifying the Tamil minority in Bangalore as the enemy), and on occasion, also religious. It is difficult to tell which way we are headed, poised as we are between two alternatives, which may each have the allegiance of two different segments of Karnataka society: On the one hand there are unfinished problems concerning Kannada national identity against the backdrop of a more and more assertive Indian national identity: this is a problem internal to the



Indian nation-state. On the other hand, there is the question of how Kannada will survive in a rapidly globalizing, increasingly Anglophone world. Here the worries are technological, cultural and historical: does the language have the resources to modernize itself and survive in today's world? Sometimes these worries give rise to unexpected proposals, such as the one recently debated about the necessity or otherwise of the letter "Ri" [ಠ] in the Kannada alphabet. Some contributors to this debate argued that Kannada has to modernize by getting rid of obsolete letters, and that only then could it hope to survive against tough competition! This is a distorted view of linguistic change: it is quite certain that social change does get reflected in language, but it is not at all clear that linguistic change, enforced by government, will lead to social change. This is only a symptom of the sorts of anxieties and fantasy solutions that arise in a situation that seems hopeless for languages that are not tied to strong world currencies. This leads us to wonder if finally identity questions are not an ideological screen for the fact that social transformation is no longer easy to conceive as a people's project.

\*\*\*

Identity is not a quality of the entity in question, there is no *substance* in Kannada or Karnataka that guarantees our identity. It is rather a question of a set of *identifications*, which we develop in order to serve as coordinates guaranteeing the stability of our sense of who we are, language being the most important of these. These identifications change frequently, and we endeavour to maintain continuity in the midst of such changes. If there is no change, then the identity freezes into something that must be *preserved*. It is only in change, as the *vachanakaras* have taught, that identity retains its value. Today, thanks to the distortions introduced by the global situation, the dominant tendency is to think that Kannada needs to be preserved, protected from change. This must give way to a more adventurous spirit, open to the experience of the new, prepared for the advent of the unexpected.

For often what we think of as our identity can be based upon fantasies which are not even our own. When we define our



identity by means of characteristics that are assigned to us by the world – spirituality, androgyny etc.- we betray our fear of freedom, our continued enjoyment of servility. The identity that we construct for ourselves should be a source of security and enjoyment for us, a place for indulging in our fantasies, but we should make sure that the fantasies are indeed ours. Our identity, in short, should be the mark of our freedom, it should be the emblem of a genuine autonomy.

We hope that the papers on Kannada identity in this inaugural issue of the journal will contribute to the ongoing debates and spark further reflection on this vexed question.



## COMMENTS

### **Australia, Modernity and Karnataka**

**-Random reflections of an incorrigible old bandicoot**

**K. Raghavendra Rao\***

I suppose that when one races towards seventy-five, one has earned the privilege of displaying signs of senile decay, the most profitable of which is to be reckless and foolish enough to explore mapless terrains. Even get lost in them! And this is precisely what I am doing now. Therefore, expect no soothing wisdom, easy coherence, comfortable consistency and tidy trimmings! why Australia? Well, I have just returned from Australia after spending a long year of exile with my son and his family in Melbourne, Victoria State, Australia. The exile could have been more lonely and unbearable if my wife Prabha were not by my side. The world is a wonderful place for unexpected and irrational connections and mis-connections. I wish I could believe in the existence of a Creator so that I could personally thank him! For instance, I chose nickname to myself a bandicoot to underline two contingent connections- I am foolish and irrelevant like a bandicoot, the Indian rat, and bandicoot symbolises a colonial connections.

The English language, a language of political power, found the need to borrow from Telugu this word by transforming the

---

\* Professor of Political Science (Retired), 7<sup>th</sup> Cross, Kalyan Nagar, Dharwad, Karnataka



original pandi kokku (literally, pig rat) into bandicoot! Even more astonishing is the Australian connection because bandicoot has a second meaning, according to The concise oxford English Dictionary (Tenth, Indian Edition). The Dictionary calls attention to the fact that bandicoot also refers to “a mainly insectivorous marsupial native to Australia and New Guinea” (p.105). This unexpected and perhaps undeserved semantic windfall in the form of an Australian connection delighted me no end!

In Australia, I found myself trapped in multiple identity crises. To start with, I felt my Indian identity intensified by constant jostling with alien identities. But when I ran into a Marathi-speaking or Hindi-speaking Indian there, my Kannada identity was inevitably aroused. But I found that Australians themselves were facing a serious identity crisis resulting from the globalising impact of American culture. Their identity crisis was also due to the increasing incursion of immigrants from Third World cultures, which naturally threatened the white-Christian identity of the majority. But even within this majority, there were identity problems precipitated by internal ethnic or linguistic divisions such as Catholic, Protestant, Greek, Italian, English, Irish and so on! To make the situation worse, there always lurked in the background the hope and the possibility of a negotiated universal human identity! But, however, it must be understood that such identity crises are relevant only to the skilled minority who are able to emigrate to lands dominated by alien cultural identities. Does it mean that the stay-at-homes have no identity worries? Certainly not. Movements within India, for instance, of persons from one identifiable cultural space to another, would lead to identity problems, though of a relatively less severe kind. The process of “modernity” raises identity crisis for even those who are spatially immobile but culturally uprooted. I bracket off the term, modernity, advisedly because it is a category now sitting at the centre of a fierce global debate.

Maybe we should abandon any puristic notion of identity, and instead, re-direct our identity discourse more fruitfully on the processes of identity formation, identity sustenance and identity dissolution. In other words, we need to uproot identities from their



alleged absoluteness. I am not suggesting that we abandon the category of identity as some have suggested in the interest of globalisation, a misleadingly disguised process of crude and cheap Americanisation! All that I am arguing for is a dynamic and historically formulated framework for understanding identities. This seems to be the right juncture in this mentally footloose rambling to enter the difficult terrain of the identity problematic of Karnataka. I have been a student of this issue for well over five decades, and I am naturally sensitive to the thorny nature of the issue. In the colonial era, there was a strong conviction among the educated middle class minority that the Kannada language was strong enough to create Karnataka identity, transcending other group identities based on subregional, caste or simply historical tradition. Of course, even during the *Ekikarana* movement, the process of building a linguistic Karnataka identity was never smooth.

It was constantly hijacked by caste conflict between Lingayats and Vokkaligas, and subregional conflicts between old Princely Mysore State and the rest of Karnataka. There were moments in the history of the *Ekikarana* movement when the whole project was on the brink of collapse. No doubt, a unified Karnataka as a political and administrative system has emerged. But did it mean that a stable and strong Karnataka identity also emerged? The answer can only be complex and necessarily ambiguous. Yes, some kind of Karnataka identity both state- sponsored and simultaneously State-weakened has emerged. The current political bickerings between the allegedly dominant South and the allegedly neglected North, I suggest, should not be read as a mere threat to Karnataka identity. It can be interpreted as a natural and logical outcome of the politics generated by the working of our elitist, competitive democracy. It is as much a mistake to think that a politician from the South or the North, in fighting for his narrow constituency, has, abandoned Karnataka-identity as to think Karnataka-identity is structurally incompatible with a competitive elite democracy. Therefore my contention is that the political process of democracy in the context of a fragmented socio-cultural system is bound to weaken strong totalizing identities but from this we cannot jump to the conclusion that it also destroys identities.



In short, a weak identity is not non-identity. Just as our historically contingent situation does not allow us to create a strong national identity, for the same reason it cannot create strong identities. Instead of doing the impossible and then drown in despair, we should learn to keep the Karnataka-identity as strong as is possible within the overall framework. This should and can be done through a leadership that is skilled in balancing pragmatism and romantic idealism.

Finally, I come to the last item in my title-modernity. Recently, in mid-August [2002], there was an interesting seminar / symposium on “modernity” (I take it that the Kannada word, *adhunikate*, roughly means modernity) organised by Manohara Grantha Mala Dharwad, a remarkably successful publication venture. The participants included, among others, Anantha Murthy, Kambar, Kurtukoti and others. I do not make any comments on details of the arguments or single out individual performances, but I shall merely look at the overall impression. One good thing was that the participants did not confuse modernity with the west, and thus were able to find space for a culture-specific articulation of modernity. But they also appeared to me to have failed to come to grips with the central issue of modernity in literature, whether here or in the west. The issue is how to relate the elitistic minority nature as well as the subjectivistic obsession of literary modernity with a democratic culture. While this issue is still being wrestled in the west itself, we fight say of engaging seriously in the debate over it. For instance, in the west there seems to have developed a significant gap between literary modernity and democratic culture. The other issue that ought to have claimed the attention of the participants in the issue whether abandoning western modernity would also mean abandoning some valid universal values of western modernity. Even in the west, the fashionable discourse on post-modernity, is yet resolve this dilemma. Well I can go on like this, since modernity is a subject that can be debated *adnauseum*. I think this is as good point as at which to take leave of you, and leave you to make sense, if any, of my somewhat chaotic presentation.



## Translating Nationalism: The Politics of Language and Community

Tharakeshwar V.B.\*

It is a common understanding that B.M. Srikantia was one of the pioneers in initiating the use of modern Kannada by abandoning old Kannada in the writing of poetry. His *English Geethagalu*, which has been a landmark since its publication, bears witness to this fact. *English Geethagalu* is a collection of translations of English poems into Kannada, published in 1923. It served as a model for the use of language in writing poetry in Kannada.<sup>1</sup> But even as he championed the use of a new standardized and modernized language for lyrics, he adopted old Kannada while translating Greek tragedy into Kannada. It is worth investigating the context of, and the views of B.M. Srikantia on, the use of different kinds of Kannada for different genres.

For this, we need to look at language which was in a ferment when it was recast by the English-educated Kannada-elite as also at how the process of recasting of language, in turn, gave them a certain kind of subjectivity.<sup>2</sup> Language is one of the crucial areas where the politics of culture is more discernible than in any other, because the relationship between language and nationalism is both intricate and deep. A construction of traditions and contestations among them took place during the colonial period. In this article, I shall explore some of the issues concerning the politics of

---

\* Lecturer, Department of Translation Studies, Kannada



University, Hampi, Vidyaranya, Karnataka- 583 276

language in the context of Kannada and of Princely Mysore. The relationship between language and colonialism, and language and nationalism, is a much-debated issue in the field of post-colonial studies. I shall not elaborate on the relationship between colonialism and English, as it is a well-researched area by now. I would mainly focus on the question of nationalism and language in the first section of this article.

In the second section, I shall look at the construction of the history of Kannada literature, language, and Princely Mysore in the colonial context. The category, *Princely Mysore*, had an interesting relationship with that of Karnataka which was just emerging in the process of the above-mentioned construction of histories. Thus, in this section, I shall touch upon the construction of Kannada / Karnataka, which was an overall result of other such processes of construction. The third section will deal with the standardization of the Kannada language, and B.M. Srikantia's views on it. I shall also try to link his views on the modernization/standardization of Kannada with his use of different kinds of Kannada in his translations.

## I

The relationship between nationalism and language has not been an important area of discussion in the standard histories of Indian nationalism. But in Europe, as Benedict Anderson (1991) has argued, language is said to have played an important role in carving out nations. Talking about the origins of national consciousness, he says: "(T)he factors involved (in making the nation popular) are obviously complex and various. But a strong case can be made for the primacy of capitalism" (Anderson, 1991: 37). He identifies the "development of print as commodity" i.e. print-capitalism, as the key factor in generating the new idea. Initially, the rich capitalists published Latin books and their market was literate Europe, "a wide but thin stratum of Latin-



readers” was their market. Once this market was saturated, the print-capitalists turned towards publications in vernaculars. Anderson identifies three factors that helped this “revolutionary vernacularizing thrust of capitalism”: 1. The change in the position of Latin: with the publication of ancient Latin literature and its dissemination among the European intelligentsia, Latin, hitherto a church language, became a repository of the sophisticated stylistic achievements of the ancients, acquiring the status of an “esoteric arcane language.” 2. The impact of Reformation: Reformation itself was aided by print-capitalism. Martin Luther was the first “best-selling author,” and was soon followed by others. This “coalition between Protestantism and print-capitalism, exploiting cheap popular editions” created large new reading publics, which included people who knew no Latin. 3. The use of vernaculars as instruments of administrative centralization by certain monarchs also helped in eroding the sacred imagined community. But Anderson is quick to add that “nothing suggests that any deep-seated ideological, let alone proto-national, impulses underlie this vernacularization” (Anderson, 1991: 41). He adds that this use of vernaculars in administration predated both print and religious upheaval, and it is different from the conscious politics of language employed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century for linguistic nationalisms. “What made the new communities imaginable was half-fortuitous, but explosive interaction between a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print) and the fatality of human linguistic diversity” (Anderson, 1991: 39). Not all-vernaculars and dialects developed into print languages. Those dialects that were capable of “being assembled, with in definite limits, into print languages were far fewer in number.” These fewer print-languages laid the bases of national consciousness in three distinct ways:

1. These print languages “created unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above spoken vernaculars.” With that, a certain kind of comprehension became possible among the various kinds of speakers existing in a language. Thus, the



speakers of a language, who were connected through print, formed “the embryo of the nationally imagined community” “in their secular, particular, visible invisibility.”

2. Print-capitalism gave a new fixity to language. This helped in the long run to build the image of antiquity that is so central to the subjective idea of the nation.

3. Print-capitalism created languages of power, of a kind different from the older administrative vernaculars. Certain dialects inevitably were ‘closer’ to each print-language, and dominated their final forms. Anderson calls this process - of marginalization of certain people who speak a language that is not near to the standard form of a new print-language-an “unconscious process resulting from the explosive interaction between capitalism, technology and human linguistic diversity” (Anderson: 1991: 44-45).

Speaking of the cultural roots of nationalism, Anderson points out that the slow and uneven decline of three inter-linked certainties (idea of a particular script-language offering privileged access to ontological truth; the belief that society was naturally organized around and under high centres - monarchs; and, a conception of temporality in which cosmology and history were indistinguishable) happened first in Western Europe, later elsewhere, under the impact of economic change, discoveries (social and scientific), and the development of increasingly rapid communications, and drove a harsh wedge between cosmology and history” (Anderson, 1991: 36). Here, Anderson is referring to colonialism, which played a pivotal role in displacing the old order in the colonies. Many scholars have pointed out that it was colonialism that was instrumental in developing a national consciousness in India. However, other scholars like Partha Chatterjee have argued that the nationalist discourse in India is not derivative of the colonial discourse, and that theories of nationalism based on western experience would be inappropriate in the Indian context.<sup>3</sup> But, again, when we come to the question of language-based nationalisms and their relation to colonialism in the Indian context, we hardly have any studies. The studies that



have been carried out on the relationship between native languages and either colonialism or nationalism do not look at the imagined communities that are formed on the basis of language; even when they do it is from the point of view of Indian nationalism or from a pan-Indian perspective.<sup>4</sup>

Sudipta Kaviraj has tried to develop the Anderson-model towards analyzing the question of language and nationalism in the Indian context.<sup>5</sup> In the traditional society, according to him, the elite carried on discussions in Sanskrit which was jealously guarded by the Brahmins through institutional arrangements and caste prohibitions. The other castes used vernaculars and numerous dialects in their daily life. The elite was bilingual. Owing to this, the scale of possible collective action or consultation became asymmetric between the elite and the subaltern groups. He puts Sanskrit at the top of his model, which he calls elite discourse and which “could range across the entire subcontinent.” The discourse of the subordinate groups remained within the closed boundaries of their vernacular dialects. “Thus, while conservatism and reaction could be subcontinental in spread, dissent was condemned to be mostly local.” During the medieval times, certain alterations occurred in this model but these did not bring about any significant changes in the linguistic economy. The castes that used literacy in administrative services extended their skill to the new languages of power, viz., Arabic and Persian. But these did not “seem to have threatened the privilege of Sanskrit.” The Hindu society tried to eject the Muslim State out of the circle of Hindu social practices. This resulted in a sharp hiatus between the political power of the State and the social dominance inside the Hindu communities. The conversion to Islam that took place during this period also helped certain groups to escape caste oppression. Kaviraj says that though this gave rise to frantic traditionalism, there were other types of exchanges that took place with the Islamic culture. He identifies the *Bhakti* doctrine as a result of this kind of religious exchange. In order to prove his hypothesis- that religious developments have an intimate relation to the story of languages that he is narrating- he dwells on the literature of the *Bhakti* movement. He says that



during this period the vernacular languages saw a gradual development and produced literature by slowly separating from the high Sanskrit-tradition. This development was very gradual and subtle. Kaviraj has characterized this development thus:

(V)ernacular literatures (Bhakti literature) and poetic traditions began an undeclared revolution. Within the formal terms of continuity with classical traditions in terms of narratives, forms and texts, these 'translations' in vernaculars were hardly passive cultural creations; and they gradually produced an alternative literature which told the same stories with subtle alternative emphases to alternative audience (Kaviraj, 1989: 35).

This tradition is now called *dusri parampara*, or second tradition, by critics like Namwar Singh. The new literatures that were emerging in vernacular languages were based on certain well-known Sanskrit texts, but they were reinterpreted to usher in a new religion. *Bhakti* movements favoured lower strata of language, and as the vernaculars were touched by religiosity, they gained a new dignity. But this "extrication" was yet incomplete, and the Sanskrit tradition continued to be the norm. He also says, "despite the beginnings of distinctive vernacular literature, people's identity must have been primarily determined by their belonging to a religious sect rather than the one of common speech."

Thus, it is clear that language-based identities, and a community based on such identities, were imagined only during the colonial, and not the medieval period. The kind of community they had during the pre-colonial period was very fuzzy, not the one which they inhabit today which is either based on nation or language, and is an enumerated communities. The shift from deriving their identity out of a fuzzy community to an enumerated one happened when these vernacular literatures were fully formed during the colonial times. He argues:

[The] Establishment of colonial power created a different structure of culture by a combination of deliberate policy and unintended consequences. .... Colonial administrations could hardly dispense with one



essential prerequisite of effective rule: intelligibility of this world to the rulers themselves. ... colonialism introduced into this social world entirely unfamiliar processes and institutions drawn from the enormous cognitive apparatus that rationalism had by this time created in the West by which alone the colonisers could make this world cognitively and practically tractable. ...one particular aspect of modernity the colonial state did introduce with effectiveness – the modern imperative of setting up social connections on an unprecedentedly large scale (Kaviraj, 1989: 41-43).

After outlining the changes that were brought about by colonialism, Kaviraj turns to the emergence of Bengali identity. He says that the efforts of the European missionaries in fashioning the printed alphabet, and the standardisation of language led to the emergence of a Bengali identity. This identity got conferred not only on those who could read high-literature but also on illiterates who could not. A standard Bengali language was evolved in this process of collaboration among the missionaries, administrators and the prime beneficiaries of colonial social transformation, viz., the social elite of Calcutta. The earlier model of Sanskrit on top, followed by vernaculars below, changed now. Sanskrit was displaced by English, and became archaic. The internal economy of the Bengali language itself became distinctly more hierarchical. Bengali, which was in “cultural contestation” with English and Sanskrit, “sought to appropriate vocabulary from both in order to make it the vehicle of serious literature, of high discussion and of science.” “This new standardized, modernized Bengali became distanced from the Bengali spoken on streets by Bengalis, though a distinct group emerged in Calcutta who would speak this kind of language.” Thus, language became a marker of social differentiation.

But, nonetheless, the illiterates whose Bengali was markedly different from that of the language of the Bhadrak, acquired the identity of a Bengali, as an imagined Bengali community emerged out of the fuzzy world in which they lived. Kaviraj says that this



Bengali identity, which he calls a regional one, was soon subsumed under a larger national identity. He cites the founding of a credible political coalition against British power as the reason for this subsumption. The subjective position “we,” the ones who have to oppose British rule, that was offered in the Bengali writings of the period initially denoted Bengalis, but later included in it others like Rajputs, Sikhs and Marathas to denote “Indians.” But he says further that though the regional and sub-regional identities were subsumed in the larger identity, they are still present in “an indistinct politically inactive state.” The dynamics of their activity depends on how successfully nationalism deals with them in the post-colonial period. Because the Indian nationalists sought to understand their world through European nationalisms, where the successful nations had a single language as their basis, Indian nationalists have perceived this as a lack and used various strategies to combat this ‘language problem.’ One of the major ways out for the nationalist-elite was creation of linguistic organization of smaller regions as “states” (as opposed to nation) based on the ‘primacy of major language.’

Let us turn to the case of Kannada and try to see whether it fits into the theoretical model sketched by Kaviraj. The history of language and identity in India delineated by Kaviraj, I would argue, falls short in analyzing the case of South Indian languages. It is not in the ‘medieval period’ that the vernacular literatures emerged in languages like Tamil. It is said that literature in Tamil was composed in as early as the first few centuries of the Christian era; at the most it is not later than the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. In Kannada, the first available text that refers to Kannada compositions is *Kaviraaja Maarga*, and is dated around 9<sup>th</sup> century AD. All this happened much before the Muslims came to power in India, and Arabic or Persian languages were almost unknown to these language-speakers. It is the Jaina poets who started producing written literature in Kannada. The first epic of Kannada, *Pampa Bhaaratha* of the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD, was written by Pampa who was a Jaina, and most of the Kannada texts that are available during this period are by Jaina writers. Thus, the trajectory of



development of Kannada literature is completely different from that of Bengali. In fact, the literature that came out of the Veerashaiva movement<sup>6</sup>, which is unsatisfactorily termed the Bhakti movement, was not at all considered literature-proper. It was considered as part of the Dharma Shaastra of Veerashaiva religion/community; only during the 20<sup>th</sup> century it came to be considered literature.<sup>7</sup> If we mean by Bhakti literature, the dynamic exchange of cultures that took place after the influence of Islam in India, then that kind of exchange took place in Karnataka after the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the literature that came out of it is still not recognized as literature-proper. Only now, some of these literatures are being collected and analyzed as part of folklore. These literatures include *Tatvapadas*, oral epics etc., Thus, there is no question of that being the beginning of literature in Kannada.

It is not that the attempts to standardize languages happened only during the colonial period. In Tamil, the first available text, *Tolakaappiam* (around 4<sup>th</sup> century AD), is an attempt to write a grammar of the Tamil language, and it identifies various dialects that are spoken and their differences from the literary language. In Kannada too, the first available text, *Kaviraaja Maarga*, attempts to standardize the language as well as to delineate the boundaries of the Kannada-speaking region. There were attempts to write a grammar for the Kannada language much before the missionary activities took place. Nagavarma's *Bhaashaabhushana* (12<sup>th</sup> century AD), Kesiraja's *Shabdamani Darpana* (around 13<sup>th</sup> century AD) and Bhattaakalanka's *Shabdaanusahasana* (1604) are some of these attempts. But these attempts were based on the model of Sanskrit grammar and used Kannada mainly to illustrate the rules that already existed in Sanskrit. If some usages of the Kannada language were found to be unexplainable by the rules of Sanskrit grammar then they termed them exceptions instead of deriving new rules for them.<sup>8</sup> In fact, the missionaries and the colonial administration just reprinted these old texts on Kannada language and circulated them in printed form during the colonial period. Thus, the trajectory of the Kannada language and the development of its literature is different from that of the Bengali

language and literature as narrated by Kaviraj.

All language-based identities need not be anti-colonial, as Kaviraj seems to suggest; even if they are the “other” for this kind of construction of language-based identities need not be the “colonial master” but could be others as well. What I have in mind here is the case of language-based identity formations like Oriya and Assamese in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which tried to fashion their identity vis-à-vis Bengali. After the treaty between the Burmese Government and the British Government in India, Assam came under British colonial rule. As the Bengali elite was influential with the colonial power in Calcutta which ruled Assam then, the colonial administration used Bengali in schools and colleges since 1837. At the same time, a kind of language consciousness originated in Assam due to the standardization processes of the language under the Christian missionaries, and the publication of books related to the Assamese language during the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is said that the Bengalis considered Assamese a dialect of Bengali and were denying to it the status of a language. The publication of books like *Grammatical Notices of the Assamese Language* in 1844 by Reverend Brown, *A Dictionary of Assamese – English*, publication of a monthly called *Arunodaya* by American Baptists, and of Assamese Bible in 1864 created a standard form of language, and a consciousness about the language. Thus a kind of distinct Assamese language-identity emerged in contrast to the Bengali, which became the “other.”<sup>9</sup> Most of such identities, based on language, were initially not anti-colonial but tried to fashion a distinct Assamese identity, by placing the dominant language, Bengali, as the other. The Kannada consciousness that emerged during the colonial period in today’s north-Karnataka (then southern Maratha, also known as Bombay Karnataka) conceived Marathi as the other to define itself. It is not that there were no Indian nationalist writings in these languages; later, these languages also became the sites of production of the Indian nationalist discourse. But this shift from “we” as Kannadigas to “we” as Indians is not simply the indication of building a pragmatic viable opposition to colonial power; it is a very



complex phenomenon, and in different cases we might obtain different reasons for such a shift. As this is not the focus of my argument in this article, I shall not elaborate on it here. But in the next section, as I focus on the construction of Kannada identity and Kannada community by examining the mechanisms of its construction, I touch upon some of the above issues pertaining to the Kannada case.

## II

Anderson's argument gives the impression that the nation alone is an imagined community. Does it mean that there are 'unimagined' communities? Or, to put it in another way, are there 'real' communities? 'Imagined' is not used in opposition to 'real,' imagined communities are also real. The collective formations that stand on blood relationships are supposed to be natural communities; even they are not natural but cultural, since social institutions such as family take different forms in different societies. Anderson clearly defines imagined community as one where the members of that community wouldn't have seen each other, and if they meet are not able to recognize each other, but still they all feel that they are members of the same community. By this definition, any group of human beings cemented by an imagination based on a principle, such as language, religion, caste, etc., would qualify to be an imagined community. There are many such collective formations where the members wouldn't have seen each other but feel that they are related.

If we look at the consequences of modern developments in India, we witness various "new" communities getting constructed through discourses, and the "old" ones either wearing a "new face" or getting reconstructed. Here, I think it necessary to ponder over the notion of community, and modern developments. The question of old and new is a matter of identifying the changes that take shape. The imagination of a community constitutes itself by (re)assembling the available material from its past, by

reinterpreting them; thus, it uses old identities and communities too, in this process.

Nations always claim to have existed from time immemorial. This has been the case even with the Indian nationalists: they claimed antiquity for their nation. But it is not that the nation takes shape in a vacuum. Imagination uses the available materials in history which are tangible and real to build a rational argument in support of its claim to antiquity. If, in Europe, the decline of the religious order gave rise to the language-based nationalisms, in India, there were attempts to equate the nation with religion: in India, we see a kind of religion-based nationalism. In the Indian nationalist discourse, we can see an equation of Hindu and India (or rather Bharat). Partha Chatterjee points out that even Bengali Muslim historians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (eg. Abdul Rahim) concurred with the Hindu writers on this question (Chatterjee, 1993a: 106).

It is not that there were no secular attempts to imagine an Indian community. In fact, this secular notion of an Indian community was able to secure hegemony over Hindu nationalism. But this so-called secular imagination of an Indian community was not able to suppress other discourses that were trying to provide a religious basis to the nation in the post-colonial era after it sat at the helm of affairs of the nation. What seems to have happened is a kind of admixture of religion and secularism. Both seem to have appropriated each other's discourse. But this is a different story than the one I am interested in narrating here.

What I am trying to point out here is that if a community is imagined in an historical context, it doesn't mean that it did not exist in some other imagined form earlier. Let me explain it with this example: if the Hindu community was imagined and fashioned in a particular way by Hindu nationalists such as the RSS in the face of modern developments, it does not mean that there was no conception of a Hindu community in the pre-modern era. But the Hindu community that was imagined by the Hindu nationalists and the conception of a Hindu community that might have existed earlier are not the same.

Now, let me try to illustrate some of these theoretical debates



by looking at the mechanisms through which a Kannada community was being imagined in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. For this, I mainly look at missionary activities, colonial administrative activities in collaboration with the native ruler in Princely Mysore, and the role played by the newly emerging public sphere focusing on the construction of a history of Kannada language, Kannada literature, and Kannada people.

The Kannada-speaking people felt the need to define themselves and imagine the boundaries of their collectivity in the particular historical context of encountering an 'other.' Some of the recent Kannada nationalist writings, including some academic writing grounded in Kannada nationalist writing, point out that there is a reference to a Kannada community in *Kaviraaja Maarga* (10<sup>th</sup> century), the first available text in Kannada.<sup>10</sup> It will be interesting to see who the 'other' then was. But the problem with these writings is that they equate this 10<sup>th</sup> century community with the one constructed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. What we need to keep in mind is that the contexts of both were different and the 'other' that defines the 'self' in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries is different from the earlier ones. Therefore, I mainly focus on the construction of a Kannada community, in the colonial context.<sup>11</sup>

In the Princely Mysore region, missionary presence predates colonial rule. The Portuguese had contacts with the Vijayanagara Kingdom since the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. Some Portuguese had settled down in the court of Chandragiri, which used to link the coast (now South and North Canara districts) with the main land. The Keladi and Bidanur states, which came up as a consequence of the fall of the Vijayanagara empire had a good relationship with the Portuguese. The Sahyadri range of hills and forests was a passage for spices trade. There is a reference to the debate that took place in the various courts of Srirangapattana on *peringimatha* (the faith of the foreigner) and Jaina faith, and the success of Vidyananda in an inscription dated 1530. B.L. Rice opines that the debate might have taken place between Vidyananda, and a Roman Catholic Christian. But there is no other evidence to establish the identity of the person who might have visited Srirangapattana.

C. Hayavadana Rao indicates that after the fall of the Vijayanagara empire, some Priests of the Franciscan Church had come to Mysore on their way to Goa, but he has not mentioned the source.<sup>12</sup> The missionary activity of conversion had begun in the 16<sup>th</sup> century itself in the Chandragiri, Bidanur and Keladi states. The Keladi King Shivappa Nayaka had given a free hand for missionary activities in his state. But the missionary activity in Srirangapattana, i.e., in Princely Mysore, began only in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Fr. Leonardo Cinnami was the first Jesuit to come to the princely Mysore state. He had come dressed like a Brahmin Sanyasi.<sup>13</sup>

The Portuguese were unable to draw any distinction among the various languages of South India and also among the languages of the western coast; so, they used their own nomenclatures for the languages they encountered. They used Malabari to designate Tamil, Badaga to designate Telugu, and various versions of Canarese (like Canaries, Canneries, Kanarese, Canarim) to designate not only Kannada but also Konkani and Marathi; it might also be because some people used the Kannada script for Marathi and Konkani, which lacked a specific script. For example, *Arte de Lingua Canarim* is a work published in 1680, but it is a grammar of the Konkani language. Fr. Leonardo Cinnami (1609-1676) has written extensively in Kannada on the Christian faith, a criticism of caste, and on the other practices of the Mysore people. He has also produced a grammar and a dictionary of the Kannada language. Leonardo Cinnami was the first Jesuit to come to Mysore. He arrived in Goa in 1644, and the next year he was sent to Canara. Even after four years, he didn't meet with much success there, after which he was sent to Mysore. Though the missionaries used to visit the Mysore region from Madras, Cinnami was the first one to establish a centre there, in 1649. He had to face many odds during his stay as the people were hostile, but he was supported by the king of Mysore, Sri Kantirava Narasaraja Wodeyar. Cinnami on his arrival learnt Kannada and he was the first person to write Kannada books. In fact, he can be called the first modern Kannada writer. But the manuscripts are not available; they might have been



burnt by King Chikka Devaraja Wodeyar around mid 1690s (Anthappa, 1994: 250). But two bundles of Kannada writings are available and the two manuscripts bear the date 1741. Havanur says that the date could be that of the copy, and that it actually contains writings/translations (mostly from Tamil) in Kannada from 1659 to 1741 (Havanur, 2000: 92). Around the same period, two books are available, which were supposedly copied in 1739, and experts claim that they are translations and compilations of several Tamil texts on Christianity. These might have been written/translated by various people including Cinnami.

These Jesuits started writing in Kannada in the 17th century itself. Amador de Santa Anna, a Franciscan missionary, translated the devotional treatise *Flos Sanctorum* into Kannada. It is also mentioned by J. Dahlman that Fr. Prizikril “turned his imprisonment at St. Juliao to good account in working out a grammar and a dictionary of Canarese from materials collected during his missionary career” (as quoted in Havanur, 2000: 89). But none of these works are available. Therefore, the first attempt to write a grammar of the Kannada language was undertaken by these missionaries in the 17<sup>th</sup> century itself. But after this, we don’t find any Kannada writings from the missionaries till the 1830s. Jesuits were called back by the Pope on the demand of the King of Portugal who accused them of being involved in anti-colonial, national struggles in Latin America. This incident casts doubt over our common understanding of an easy equation between missionary activities and colonial power. I am not suggesting that there is no relationship between colonial power and missionary activities, but they are not one and the same; the relationship between the two, as the above withdrawal of Jesuit missionaries suggests, is much more than what an easy equation of the two assumes. The King of Bidanur, and of Mysore gave permission to missionaries for their activities. In fact, when the Viceroy of Goa, Emmanuel Saldanha Albuquerque, wrote a letter to the King of Mysore to extradite the Jesuits to Goa so that they can be sent back to Europe, the Mysore palace wrote back to him saying “The Jesuits are serving in Mysore since a hundred years. They are respecting the Crown and the law

of the land. We don't see any reason to extradite them. It would be better if they continue to be here" (as translated and quoted in Anthappa, 1994: 334).

But in spite of the assurance and permission by the King for their missionary activities, these Jesuits were harassed by other religious leaders and Sanyasis. The common accusation against them was that they condemn other religious practices of India such as idolatry and that they indulge in practices that are prohibited for a Sanyasi in "our" traditions. But most of the time the King, who was pleased with the gifts given by the missionaries to him, ignored these accusations. But once the British started indulging in territorial war with the Mysore state, the anti-missionaries started accusing the missionaries of spying for the European invaders. This also was largely ignored. During Hyder Ali's period (1761-1782) also the missionaries enjoyed his protection. But when he acquired Mangalore from the British in 1768 during the First Anglo-Mysore war, it appears that the Christians of Mangalore had helped the British. Hyder called them to his court and asked them what penalty is prescribed in their religion for helping the enemy of the King. It seems they replied "Capital punishment." But Hyder, instead of punishing them, took away their properties and imprisoned some of them. The Christians of Mangalore again helped the British in the Second Anglo-Mysore war (1780-83). This time it seems, Hyder's successor, his son Tippu punished them severely.

With the fall of Tippu, all of south India from the east-coast to the west-coast came under the British rule. Already, with the battle of Plassey, the British had consolidated their power in the North. Now, the other competing colonial powers had accepted the supremacy of the British in India. The smaller princely states posed no danger to the British. All this necessitated a suitable administrative machinery to govern India. Efforts had begun in the latter half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century itself. They had to set up everything new, as they had nothing with which to govern this country. Added to it was the financial position of the Company after the battle of Plassey. The company was in such a situation



that it petitioned the British Parliament to give financial aid to deliver administration. The British Parliament passed an Act to reform the administration in 1772 and appointed Governor-Generals for the Bengal, Bombay and Madras provinces. Thus, necessary steps were being taken to form a colonial state in India.

But these institutions needed trained manpower to handle work such as maintaining law and order, collecting taxes, giving suitable directions to natives and also collecting information about natives in order to administer them. Therefore, the British established colleges to train administrators - first was the Fort Williams College at Calcutta in 1800, then Fort Saint George, Madras. Both the colleges were started around the same time as the fall of Tippu Sultan. It is interesting to know that the 32 lakhs that came to the British Government after the IV Anglo-Mysore War was utilized to teach native languages, and thus the Fort Williams College was established. First, the North Indian languages were given priority along with the teaching of Hindu religious texts. Later, South Indian languages were also included in the curriculum. It was necessary for the trainee-administrators to have a working knowledge of the local languages for better governance. Thus, passing the examination in one of the native languages was compulsory to them. Therefore, teachers, popularly known then as *Munsi* and *Pandit*, were appointed at these places to teach the native languages and to examine the trainee-administrators.<sup>14</sup> The 1804 records of the College show that two *Munsis* for Tamil and one for Kannada were appointed on a monthly salary of Rs. 200. But there was a clear discrimination with regard to the salary paid to the European and the native scholars. In January 1804, the teachers of the south Indian languages were transferred to Fort St. George College (Sham, 1966: 6).<sup>15</sup> Apart from *Munsis* and *Pandits* who were teaching native languages at Calcutta and Madras, a need to create a post called official translator arose in the colonial administration as colonial administration used English while the subjects used different native languages in their transactions with them. The status of these official translators was that of the secretaries of administrative departments. Some of these

official translators too engaged in writing grammar and dictionaries.

But the main problem in teaching the native languages was that there were no teaching materials. Therefore, there arose a need to produce knowledge about these languages. For teaching, they sought to collect the materials available in those languages which were in written form, mostly manuscripts written on paper or on palm leaves. The work done by Christian missionaries, though only on very few languages, was the only model available to them. One of the important tasks they encountered was that of writing the grammar of the languages. There were no authentic grammatical texts available for many languages. South Indian languages had their “own” grammar texts but derived not out of the language that was in use, but modeled on Sanskrit grammar, and these texts were also quite old. For the next hundred years or so, they actively engaged themselves in this area.

After Fr. Cinnami’s 17<sup>th</sup> century effort to write a Kannada Grammar which is now not available,<sup>16</sup> William Carey took up the task once again at Fort Williams in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. A letter written by him to the Chief Secretary to the Government in 1816 shows that he had engaged a Kannada Pandit Bharata Ramana to help him. (Quoted in Sham, 1966:16). Around the same time, at Fort St. George, John Maccarell, who served as a sub-collector at Canara, learnt Kannada and proposed a Grammar to the Fort St. George. On the basis of Kesiraja’s *Shabdhamani Darpana*<sup>17</sup> he wrote *A Grammar for the Carnataca Language* with the help of Shambapati Meenakshayya, Kadambi Rangachari and Mudambi Srinivasachari. Based on Maccarell, Hudson wrote *An Elementary Grammar of the Kannada Language* (Havanur, 2000: 153-54). S. Krishnamachari, who was a student at Fort St. George wrote a grammar in a question and answer format in 1838, while Adakki Subbarao wrote a primer for trainee-officers which included Kannada-English translation exercises. Simple grammar books, for use in missionary schools in Bellary, Bangalore, Mysore, Dharwad and Mangalore, came next. Collin Campbell’s *Kannada Vyaakarana Saara* (1841) seems to be the first such, according to



Havanur. Apart from similar works by Frederick Ziegler (*A Practical Key to Kannada Grammar*), and T.G. Maben (*Kannada Vyaakarana Bodhini*), there were also books by native scholars such as B. Mallappa (*Shabdhaadarsh*), M.B. Srinivasa Iyengar (*Vaachaka Bodhini*), Dhondo Narasimha Mulabaagalu (*Kannada Kaipidi* and *Nudigattu*), Baala Shastri Naregal (*Vaani Mukura*) Muda Bhatakala (*Hosagannada Vyaakarana*), and Narasimha Maadhava Mahishi (*Prosody of the Kannada Language*). The finest achievement in this field, F. Kittel's *A Grammar of the Kannada Language* (1903), was preceded by nearly a hundred years' work by others.

Another important task the colonial administrators took upon themselves, along with the Christian missionaries, was the preparation of a bilingual dictionary of the language. William Reeve of the London Mission was the first one to make an effort in this direction. As assistant to John Hands at Bellary in translating the Bible, he started work on the first bilingual dictionary in 1817 with the help of seven natives. He followed the simple method of providing Kannada meanings to English words in the English dictionary. Later, he added Sanskrit words even though they were not in use in Kannada, as well as old Kannada words. The first draft was ready by 1823 and a revised version by 1825. The Bangalore School Book Society formed a committee of missionaries to prepare an English-Kannada dictionary in 1840, but eventually John Garret of Wesleyan Methodist Mission completed the work in 1843. This committee took no notice of Reeve's dictionary (Havanur, 2000: 107), leading us to assume that at this stage there was no coordination of efforts among various missionary groups. The next year John Garret brought out a Kannada-English dictionary, a modified version of Reeve's, which was revised by Daniel Sanderson. It was very popular in schools and colleges, then. But again, the credit for preparing a full-fledged dictionary goes to F. Kittel. Basel Mission entrusted the responsibility of preparing a Kannada-English dictionary to Kittel in 1872. It took him 12 years to finalize the work. It was finally published in 1894. He has looked into the earlier

dictionaries available in Kannada like Nachiraja's *Nachirajiya* (around 14<sup>th</sup> century), Bomma's *Chaturasya Nighantu*, Abhinava Mangaraja's *Nighantu*, Devottama's *Naanaartharatnaakara*, Linga's *Kabbigara Kaypidi* and Tottada Arya's *Sabdamanjari* by collating various available manuscripts (Kittel, 1894: VII). He has also consulted 18 old Kannada works, 18 medieval Kannada works and around three new Kannada books apart from school textbooks that existed during that time. He has also collected, on his own, Kannada words that were in use through an empirical methodology.<sup>18</sup> In preparing the format of the dictionary he has consulted Reeve's *Carnataka and English dictionary* published in 1832 and also Tamil-English, Tulu-English, Telugu-English, and Sanskrit dictionaries too (Kittel, 1894: V-VII).

The missionaries were also engaged in bringing out printed books in Kannada, apart from books about Kannada. They not only brought out Christian literature in Kannada, and school textbooks but also published old Kannada palm-leaf manuscripts, duly edited.<sup>19</sup> But printing called for the standardization of both language as well as script. Gonsalvez at Goa tried to develop a Kannada type to print texts in Konkani (which had no script), but didn't succeed. William Carey's *A Grammar of the Kurnata Language* (1817) used a type prepared by Carey's Bengali employee Manohar, in 1815. Later, in the Fort St. George, John Maccarell's book *A Grammar of the Carnataka Language* (1820) and William Reeve's *English-Kannada Dictionary* (1824) were published. After that the Kannada book printing activity in these two places stopped. John Hands, who was working as a missionary in Bellary, made efforts to print books in Kannada. His Kannada translation of the New Testament was published in 1820 but in the Commercial Press, Madras. Later he established a press in Bellary, in 1827. At first, Telugu types were used to print both Kannada and Telugu texts, but in 1832, he brought Kannada types made in London. In 1840, the Wesleyans established their own press in Bangalore, and they made efforts to improve Kannada types. Thomas Hudson, Watts, Garret, Sanderson-all made their contribution to improve Kannada types, as did the Basel Mission.



Hermann Moegling, while publishing his edited book *Rajender Naame* (1857), changed the script itself to suit easy printing. Here, the second consonant of a consonant cluster, which used to be printed below the first consonant was printed in the same line, thus saving space. This was the first attempt of its kind. Moegling anticipated objections to this new venture from readers accustomed to the old style and tried to justify his decision, but this change did not carry weight. When, after eighty years, B.M. Srikantia and others mooted similar changes, it was again met with opposition. The Kodiala press at Mangalore also made its contribution to standardize Kannada types. Apart from the efforts of Christian missionaries, the presses established by the Governments in the Madras and Bombay presidencies, Mysore state and the Universities of Madras and Bombay have also contributed to these efforts. Individual efforts by natives also started in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most of these efforts were made in the Kannada districts of the Bombay presidency. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most of the Taluks and towns had printing presses.

With the advent of printing technology, the missionaries and the teachers at Fort Willams College and St. Fort George started publishing the old manuscripts they had been collecting. The first major effort in this direction was by Basel Mission's Hermann Moegling. Moegling took up the publication of old Kannada texts under the series titled *Bibliotheca Carnatica* in 1848 on the advice of the retired Resident of Mysore J.A. Casamaijor (1824-35). The first to get published in the series was *Jaimini Bharata* of Lakshmisha in 1848. In 1849, *The Torave Ramayana* was published. A collection of Daasa poems came out in 1850. Kanakadasa's *Hari Bhakti Saara* was also published in this series. Then, *Chennabasava Puraana*, *Kumaravyasa Bharata*, *Basava Puarana* and a collection of Kannada proverbs were published. All these texts were published within a span of 10 years. For editing these texts, the University of Tuebingen conferred an honorary doctorate on him in 1858. Moegling had also translated a few Kannada Daasa poems into German.

Nagavarma, a 12<sup>th</sup> century grammarian, occupied an important place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially through his *Karnataka Bhaasha*

*Bhushana*, the oldest extant Kannada grammar. It is natural that this text occupied an important place in their reading list, along with Kesiraja's *Shabdhamani Darpana* which was published by John Garret in 1868. Nagavarma's *Kannada Chandassu* (*Canarese Prosody*) was published by Kittel in 1875, and *Karnataka Bhaasha Bhushana* was published by B. Lewis Rice in 1884. *Bhaasha Bhushana* was published in the series *Bibliotheca Karnatica* brought out by B. Lewis Rice from 1884 onwards. *Kaviraaja Maarga*, the first available Kannada text (10<sup>th</sup> century) so far, was also brought out in this series. Bhattaakalanka's *Shabdaanusahasana* (early 17<sup>th</sup> century), another grammatical text, was also brought out in this series. Kannada versions of the epics, Pampa's *Pampa Bharata* or *Vikramarjuna Vijaya* and Nagachandra's *Pampa Ramayana* were also brought out in this series.

Let me describe the way these old texts were published and the consequences they had for the construction of Kannada and Kannada literature. Most of these texts were palm-leaf manuscripts, so their circulation was very restricted. Even if one searched hard, it was very difficult to find the manuscripts, as the person or the family which was in possession of it, wouldn't know much about it. As literacy was limited to the Brahmin caste, only a few among them had access to these manuscripts. Jaina texts were mainly in the Jaina *mathas* (monasteries). With the ascent of Veerashiva religion/sect, the Jaina religion which was literally responsible for the origin of literature in Kannada went into decline. Therefore, most of these texts were not at all available. But Vaidic literature which came after Jaina and Veerashiva literatures like *Kumaravyasa Bharata* of Gadugina Naranappa was in limited circulation: people could be found reciting them in villages on festive occasions. It means that it was only through the oral tradition that some of this literature was in circulation, though they were in written form. But apart from the limited circulation of some of these texts most of the other texts, had been forgotten. Thus, the missionaries and colonial administrators, for their own reasons, brought these texts out of amnesia and made them not into Jaina or Vaidic texts as they were known until then, but into Kannada texts.



In spite of the difficulties in procuring them, the missionaries, and the colonial administrators had consulted more than one manuscript to establish a text. For example, to publish Nagavarma's *Canarese Prosody* F. Kittel had consulted 14 manuscripts, drawn from different collections, including those of B.L. Rice and Tirumale Syamanna, *Munsi* of the Wesleyan missionaries at Mysore. Rice obtained other manuscripts from other individuals and *maths* (Kittel, 1986: III-IV). Establishing the correct text was a difficult task, as discrepancies were bound to occur in manually copied manuscripts, where the copier also manipulates some of the things consciously (to suit his religion or sect) or unconsciously (by misreading the source-manuscript). As the texts left their many oral and written versions behind once they were printed in correct versions, they acquired a new identity as Kannada texts. Now, the texts were attached to a particular author and to a particular historical circumstance of its origin. Today, if one wants to debate the authorship and authenticity of a text, one will have to do it on the terms and conditions laid out by European scholarship. These texts thus became classical texts of Kannada and formed part of a canon-in-the-making.

The newly emerging English-educated native elite became the avid readers of such publications, although they were not really addressed to them. As the primary target readers were the missionaries, administrators, and European Oriental scholars, there used to be commentary on the text in English. In order to supplement the reading of the text, the background of the author and the text were also added. For example, B.L. Rice provides four pages of introduction to Nagavarma and his works, two pages on the Kannada language and script, and a twenty-nine page introduction to Kannada literature with an alphabetical index to authors and works with two hundred and fifty, and three hundred entries, respectively.

The introductions sought to place the texts in an historical matrix, and to construct a new notion called Kannada literature with a History. Though, at this time, there was no political entity called a Kannada region or Karnataka, these efforts pushed them

in the direction of conceiving a unified Kannada language and literary tradition and a region called Karnataka. In his introduction to Nagavarma, Lewis Rice uses the word Karnata-territory: “Nagavarma left Vengi after embracing Jaina faith, and settled in some part of the Karnata-region which was subject to the sway of the Western Chalukya kings: in all probability somewhere in the neighbourhood of the present Shimoga, Dharwad and Bellary districts” (Rice, 1985: I). These were not without a link to the present, as can be seen in the above statement. This connection of an event with the present fuses both together and gives a sense of continuity, turning language and literature into eternal entities. A sense of pride about a language and literature emerges in the people who speak it. This was already so when Rice wrote this introduction. At the end of the introduction (the third section), he points out while speaking of Kannada literature that

The extent and range of this body of writings will doubtless excite surprise, so virtually unexplored has the field remained, and so little acquaintance is there with the resources of the language. The early excellence of the compositions and the modern decline will be patent to all. But interest is even now awakening in the mother tongue of the Kannadigas; while the Native state of Mysore, recently (1881) restored to its own rulers, has a special mission to discharge, in relation to the learned world of Orientalists in general and to Karnataka and South India in particular, in vindicating the claims and promoting a revival of the culture of its sonorous and expressive language (Rice, 1985: xxxvii).

Here, he has identified the awakening of the Kannadigas towards their mother tongue. Not only that, we can clearly see that the political identity of Mysore state is overarched by Karnataka. He places the responsibility of reviving the culture of Karnataka/Kannada on the Mysore state. This is part of the process of tradition- building for the natives by the colonizer, where tradition is constructed in the terms of golden age (early excellence) and



decline (modern decline). The tradition thus constructed by the orientalist, claims itself as “pure.”

Missionaries and colonial administrators did publish books with the aim of reaching the natives. In his preface to the anthology of Kannada poetry, *Canarese Poetical Anthology* (1874), Kittel claims that “the present volume of selections of Canarese poetry has been prepared not only with regard to the want of schools, but also with the aim to cultivate a taste for good poetry in the reader” (Kittel, 1995: iii). A Victorian morality was behind this version of good taste, which makes him omit certain passages “as (they) appeared to be inconsistent with a high culture of the mind.” He also claims that true poetry is characterized by “purety (*sic.*) and freedom from sectarianism” (Kittel, 1995: iii). It is true, in a way, that what were termed as sectarian literature and religious literature were lifted out of the milieu of their writing and circulation, and made part of a secular Kannada poetic tradition. An anthology of this kind fulfilled an essential need for the construction of a Kannada identity. It begins suitably with a eulogy to the language. This anthology includes Jaina, Vaidic, Virashiva and Vaishnavite poets. But all these form part of Canarese poetry, though the sect/religion of the author is mentioned while introducing them in the introduction. Not only classical poetry and texts figure in these texts, even non-classical and folk poets such as *Sarvajna*,<sup>20</sup> *Daasa* poets and other textual writers figure extensively in this anthology of 103 selections.

The first attempt to sketch an introductory history of Kannada literature dates back to 1846. Gottfried Weigle, a Basel Mission Christian missionary wrote an article “On the Canarese Language and Literature” in German, while he was staying in the Nilgiri mountains. This article was originally written for publication in a German mission magazine, but as it was found to be too scientific, it was published in an Oriental journal called *Zeitschrift der Deutschen morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* Vol. 2 in 1848.<sup>21</sup> This essay analyses and introduces Kannada language, and also Kannada literature. He has not only looked into classical texts but also popular literature such as *Vachana* literature,<sup>22</sup> *Daasa* literature<sup>23</sup>

and *Yakshagaana*.<sup>24</sup> Translations of Purandara Dasa's poems are quoted in this article, and folk literatures find a mention. More recent writings in Kannada, including Bible translations, are taken note of. The essay concludes by saying that

Canarese people, with whom this essay deals, even if it is still a barely-known name at home (Germany), in their language, ethos and literature are in no way on a contemptuous level, and that this language and literature merit a closer perusal of the true and highest interests of the people, and where possible, active participation.... (Gundert, 1997: 291).

The next important attempt to write a history of the Kannada language and literature was made by Kittel, in 1874. While introducing Nagavarma's *Canarese Prosody* (1875), after writing twenty-three pages of introduction to the text on hand, he has written an essay of fifty-three pages on Kannada literature titled "An Essay on Canarese Literature." This is a fuller length piece on Kannada literature than the earlier one by Weigle. Weigle had simply tried to introduce various things, which had come to his notice. But by the time Kittel wrote his essay, many more texts were available. Therefore, from that vantage point and with his erudition, Kittel classified Kannada literature into three phases: 1. The Early period (800-1300 AD) 2. The Later period (1300-1872 AD) and 3. Recent printed texts. His treatment of the subject was exhaustive. He provided details about individual writers if available, and made a mention of contending versions, if any, and tried to examine some of them to give his opinion. At the end of each section, he gave an index of the writers of that period. The final section contained a list of books that were published from Bangalore and Dharwad.

After this came the list provided by Rice in his introduction to Nagavarma's *Karnataka Bhaasha Bhushana* (1884) which I have already mentioned. Later on, the natives began to take interest in these studies, but I will come to that point a little later.

It is not that the construction of a Kannada identity began with the writings on language and literature alone. There were other



writings, which have played their part too in the construction of a Kannada identity. Now, let me move over to the construction of the history of Princely Mysore. As there was no Karnataka then, naturally the history on Karnataka didn't come as easily as the histories of Kannada language and literature. First, we examine writings on Princely Mysore. Tippu was a formidable opponent in war for the British. He was determined to root out the British from India for which he had made friendship with the French, as they were competing with the British. With Tippu, it was simply a case of the enemy's enemy becoming his friend. In order to obtain information about Princely Mysore, which was necessary for them to have a better understanding of their enemy and the land on which they were waging war, the British resorted to writings by their military officers who had participated in the three Anglo-Mysore wars. We find abundant literature on the British encounter with Tippu. The fear of Tippu, and the stories of the British encounter with him seem to have given rise to a large number of writings, making it almost a separate genre by itself. It might have been a "popular genre" during that period.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the writings on Tippu were the main source of information on Princely Mysore for the British.<sup>26</sup>

But the decisive act of the British after the take-over of Mysore was the survey of the region. This was prompted by the need to obtain information on the people, and land. Accordingly, Col. Mackenzie was appointed to conduct the survey in 1801, which he completed in 1807. Covering nearly 40,000 kms. of South India, he collected 1700 epigraphs, 600 old manuscripts, local histories and myths, and other important old materials with the assistance of a number of natives. He classified the manuscripts into Myth, Poetry, Narratives, *Shaastras* and Jaina Discourse. Mackenzie simply classified the manuscripts available to him; it was left to Kittel to construct a literary tradition out of these materials, with periodization. Mackenzie encouraged Kirmani to write the history of Tippu. *Kaifiyats*, which Mackenzie had collected, are perceived as important sources of history even today. *Kaifiyats* are written by various people on the request of Mackenzie; they include

the oral history of a temple, of a place, or of a community.<sup>27</sup> He had asked Devachandra of Kanakagiri near Mysore to write the history of Karnataka. Thus, an important historical document like *Raajavali* (the Genealogy of Kings) came up in Kannada.<sup>28</sup> The unpublished Mackenzie collection is yet to be tapped properly to understand the history of Princely Mysore/Karnataka, especially of the kind of discourse that colonialism gave rise to among the natives about their own places, communities, and their relationships with other communities.

After Mackenzie, it was the turn of Francis Buchanan to travel through Princely Mysore and the other parts of today's Karnataka. A doctor by profession, he had already done a survey of the Nepal and Assam regions.<sup>29</sup> His observations are published in *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar*, in three volumes (1807).<sup>30</sup>

But it was Mark Wilks who first took up the task of writing a history of Mysore. As a Resident in Mysore from 1805-1808, he had collected a lot of information on the region. His book, *Historical Sketches of the South of India, From the origin of the Hindu Government of that State, to the extinction of the Mohammedan Dynasty in 1799; Founded Chiefly on Indian Authorities*, 2 vols. 1810 continues to be an important source for historians. In this book, he has not only narrated the rise and fall of dynasties, but has tried to attempt a social history of the region too.

In northern Karnataka, similar attempts were made by the British officers belonging to the Bombay presidency. Philip Meadows Taylor was in the Hyderabad-Nizam region, and was in a small princely state called Surapur. He did a lot of archeological work around Surapur. He has also written about the architecture of ruins at Bijapur, Anegondi, Hampi, Lakkundi, Badami, and Ihole. His book *Sketches in Deccan* (1837) contains his sketches of the architecture of these places. He published the *Architecture of Bijapur* and *Architecture in Dharwar and Mysore*, in 1866. He was a novelist, and wrote a historical novel titled *Tippu Sultan*. *Outlines of Indian History* is another major work. Walter Elliot



joined the British army at Madras in 1821. He was captured and kept in captivity by Kittor Chennamma, in 1824.<sup>31</sup> He was instrumental in opening Kannada schools in the Kannada region of the Bombay Presidency. He had also tried his hand at preparing Kannada texts, in 1833. He was a kind of Mackenzie of North Karnataka. He had collected more than 1300 epigraphs and submitted a scholarly work on "Hindu Inscriptions" to the Royal Asiatic Society. He has also done work on the history of Kannada scripts as early as in 1836. He tried to narrate nearly 500 years of Karnataka History using the epigraphs that he had collected. His *Memoirs* published after his retirement is also a good source-book for the social history of the region during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He has also written a book on Forest animals of the region. Charles Darwin had corresponded with him to obtain information about the zoological species available in the region. He had contributed regularly to *Indian Antiquary Journal* on the history of Karnataka and other cultural aspects. He also has books to his credit such as *The Memoir of the States of the Southern Maratha Country*<sup>32</sup> which describes the princely state of Savanur, and also has an account of South Indian coins.

After Walter Elliot, it was J.F. Fleet, a revenue officer, who worked on this aspect of North Karnataka. Most of his writings are found in *Indian Antiquary* and *the Journal of Royal Asiatic Societies*. Besides editing the journal *Indian Antiquary* for seven years with R.C. Temple, he has published some Sankrit, Pali and *Halegannada* (Old Kannada) Inscriptions, in 1878. In addition, he has written an article on Kannada dynasties in the Bombay Gazetteer, and was also the first to engage in folklore work. He collected *Lavanis* (popular ballads of North Karnataka), and published some of them in *Indian Antiquary*. It appeared five times in *Indian Antiquary* between 1885 and 1890.<sup>33</sup> Most of these ballads were related to various uprisings against the British in North Karnataka. The articles contain an introduction and an analysis along with transliteration of the Kannada ballads and a translation of the same. Of his collection of Ballads in the first article in the series, he says that

their historical and political value consists in their giving us the genuine native view, never intended for European ears, of our system of administration, and of what is thought of the various measures that we have taken to introduce and enforce it,- the popular native opinion about the local officers, who, to the lower classes, represent the government in person, and who in well-known cases, are constantly mentioned by name in these songs, - and illustrations, of the most ingenuous kind, of traits of native character which are familiar otherwise only to those who have had long official experience in this country (Fleet, 1885: 293-94).

The intention of collecting these ballads is to know how natives perceived the British, and their administration. This work is hailed as path-breaking and pioneering by native folklorists of later years. In fact, the collection has fuelled nationalist plays on those who fought in those insurrections.

At the same time, in the southern part of Karnataka, B.L. Rice was engaged in a similar kind of work, - that of editing the epigraphs. B.L. Rice was born in Bangalore in 1836. His father, Benjamin, was a missionary. He had studied abroad, but came back to work in Bangalore, in 1860. First, he was a School Head Master, and then became Inspector of Schools. He was Education Officer in Coorg. He played a key role in the Census conducted in Mysore in 1881. He also published the *Mysore Gazetteer* in two volumes, which became a better model for future Gazetteers in India. In 1879 he prepared a volume of Mysore inscriptions, and was in-charge of the Archeological department that came into existence in 1885. He planned to publish all the epigraphs in the districts that came under his jurisdiction in the series *Epigraphia Karnatica*, and brought out 12 volumes in the series. He published regularly in the *Indian Antiquary* and *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, and his published articles number more than fifty. He also attempted to write the history of Mysore and Coorg using the inscriptions, and was actively engaged in editing and publishing old Kannada manuscripts as we have seen earlier. He published



the revised version of *Ramayana* edited by M.A. Ramanuja Iyengar, in 1868. Later, *Amara Kosha* (1873) was published. *Bibliotheca Karnatica* was yet another ambitious project, under which he brought out many old Kannada texts like *Bhaasha Bhushana*, *Shabdhaanushaasana*, *Pampa Ramayana* and *Pampa Bhaarata*. There was a constant academic dialogue/dispute between B.L. Rice and J.F. Fleet on dating epigraphs, and on other issues.

The British Officers also used Kannada in their administration. There is a long list of administrators who used Kannada in their work. Some of them such as J.F. Fleet, Col. Taylor, Abercrombie, Mark Cubbon, John Garret, Thomas Hudson, Thomas Munroe, Anderson, John Mackerel, Raymond West, C.A. Roberts, Walter Eliot, J. Garret and H.J. Brookeman not only knew Kannada but also worked as Kannada translators.<sup>34</sup>

Bible translations, textbook writing, history writing, publishing old Kannada texts, collecting epigraphs and other related materials of history-were tasks in a common endeavour which brought missionary groups and administrators together. The result of all these was the construction of an entity called Karnataka, and its history, Kannada language, and Literary history.

The native elite carried these activities further. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an awakening of love for the mother tongue was clearly discernible. Many of the natives, who were also trained by the above, and had assisted them in their work, took on the mantle now. R. Narasimhacharya started his career as a schoolteacher, in 1882. Later, he went on to acquire M.A. in Kannada that had just begun in the Madras University. He was appointed translator, in 1894. In 1899, he joined the Archeological Research Institute to assist B.L. Rice. After B.L. Rice, Narasimhacharya became the Director of the Archeological Institute in 1906, and continued till 1922. He collected more than 5000 epigraphs. He had studied the architecture of nearly a thousand religious structures belonging to all religions. He edited a volume of epigraphical poems in *Shaasana Padya Manjari* (1923). It focuses on the way Kannada language developed over the years. His magnum opus is the 3-volume *Karnataka Kavi Charite* (Vol. 1- 1907, Vol. 2 – 1919 and Vol. 3 -

1929), with details about 1148 poets. He had consulted nearly 2000 manuscripts for this purpose. He refined it with each volume. The much talked about history of Kannada literature was now available in a totality. The seeds sown in the previous century had begun to bear fruit. R. Narasimhacharya also wrote the *History of Kannada Language* in 1934. These were lectures delivered at Mysore University as Readership lectures in 1926. Similarly, the lectures given at Bangalore have come out as *History of Kannada Literature*. Most of his arguments are based on earlier attempts made by Europeans, but he has dared to take issue with them in the light of new materials available to him. Not only that, a sense of pride in the language can also be seen in his analysis such as in his definition of Kannada language, where he engages himself in the etymological interpretation of the word “Kannada” to prove that because it is a good language it has acquired that name. This sense of pride in the language, based on a simple assertion through etymological circus was very common. A cursory look at the books published at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries clearly shows that there was a sense of Kannada pervading all over. We find more than eighty books bearing the words Karnataka or Kannada in their title.<sup>35</sup>

In the writings of Alur Venkatarao, this love of language takes a turn towards Kannada nationalism. He studied in Pune at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and was greatly influenced by Balagangadhar Tilak. A kind of anti-Marathi sentiment awakened the Kannada sentiment in as well as a few other Kannadigas. His autobiography *Nanna Jeevana Smrithigalu* (1974) narrates how different people who went to study at Pune, who never thought that they were Kannadigas came to be called Kannadigas by the Marathi-speaking people. It was a classic case of ascribed identity, which grew on them by turning Marathi as the ‘other’ for its self-construction. It was certainly different from the kind of Kannada that was getting constructed out of the orientalist discourse produced by the Missionaries and the other administrators/scholars. This is not to suggest that Alur Venkatarao did not make use of the orientalist discourse. In fact, it was the



orientalist discourse that came in handy while constructing a glorious past for Karnataka.

Alur Venkatarao's *Karnataka Gata Vaibhava* (1919) attempts to construct a glorious past for Karnataka. It was based on the writings on Hampi and other places by the orientalist. In North Karnataka, there was an overlapping of Hindu and Kannada identity. Though initially the "other" was Marathi for the Kannada self-construction, the language that they used was one of Indian nationalist writings of the Tilak-kind where obviously the "other" also became Muslim. This is evident not only in *Karnataka Gata Vaibhava*, where the fall of the Vijayanagara kingdom is mourned as the fall of Kannada and Hinduism, but also in the writings of one of the early novelists of the region, Galaganatha. Galaganatha was a very popular novelist among whose important works are *Kannadigara Karma Kathe*, *Kumudini*, *Madhava Karuna Vilasa*. He is identified as a "revivalist writer" by scholars like Padikkal (Padikkal, 2001: 180).

Shamba Joshi, another scholar of North Karnataka, has also written extensively on Kannada and Karnataka. Some of his works are *Karnata Samskritiya Purva Peetike* (1969) *Karnatakada Veera Kshatriyaru* (1936), *Kanmareyaada Kannada* (1933), *Kannada Nudiya Huttu Athavaa Nirukta* (1937), *Kannada Nele* (1939), *Kannada Nudiya Jeevaala* (nd), *Kannada Kate* (1947). Shamba Joshi was not so popular as Galaganatha or Alur Venkatarao; perhaps his discourse, though well within the Kannada nationalist framework, somehow displaces the upper-caste Brahmin group from the protagonist position in its narrative.

The popularity of Galaganatha can be ascribed to the genre in which he wrote. But Alur Venkatarao was not only a writer but also an activist who involved himself in many activities that led to the popularity of his writings. He practised law, to begin with. He established many publishing houses, such as Karnataka Grantha Prasara Mandala (1908), Nava Jeevana Grantha Bhandara and Geethakusuma Manjari. He played a key role in holding the All Karnataka Publishers meet in Dharwad twice, in 1907 and 1908. He edited many magazines and journals like *Vagbhushana*,

*Kannadiga, Jaya Karnataka, Karma Veera*. He was the president of Shankaracharya Samskrita Patashale (1910-1920), Shantesh Vachanalaya (10 years), Karnataka Itihasa Mandala (Karnataka History Association, 1914-1930) and Kannadigara Sangha. He was the Founder of Karnataka Sabhe, the Secretary of Karnataka Rastriya Parishat (Karnataka National Conference) held at Dharwad in 1920, and also of All Karnataka Universities Committee. He was the main initiator of the 600<sup>th</sup> year celebration of Vijayanagara Empire, in 1935. Thanks to his *Karnataka Gata Vaibhava* and the celebration, which was attended by all the main Kannada writers of the period, Vijayanagara/Hampi began to occupy an important position in the construction of Kannada, and Kannada identity.<sup>36</sup>

In the Mysore region, the main organization that played a key role, apart from the University and the State was Kannada Sahitya Parishat, founded in 1917. Other public sphere institutions like newspapers and magazines also played their role. Through the activities of the missionaries, colonial officials, and later on, native educated elite, and the activities in the public sphere that emerged, a notion of Kannada community was imagined, and efforts in the form of a pan-Karnataka organization and movements to establish a single University for the entire Kannada-speaking region to bring that nation into existence complemented this process.

It is not that print technology merely created a unified field of exchange among people who spoke the same language. It also fuelled other kinds of construction of community too. As I have shown earlier, the number of publications with the word Kannada and Karnataka as part of their titles was sizable, but that does not present the entire picture; there were other kinds of publications too. What were they? Venkatesh Sangali's descriptive bibliography tells us that there were nearly twenty books that were published during that period with the word 'Hindu' in the title. If we look at the bibliography more closely the majority of the books published were on religious issues. The number of books that have the word 'Arya' in their title are more than ten. Let me randomly pick a letter, lets say *aa*, and I give a small excerpt of it here: *Atma*



*Nivedanam* (The Deposition of Atma), *Atma Bodhe* (Teachings on Atma), *Atma Ramayana*, *Atma Vidya Vilasa* (The Knowledge of Atma), *Atma Shakthiya Tejassu* (The Power of Will), *Atmanubhava Prakashike* (Book on Inner/Spiritual Experience), *Adikavi Valmiki, Adi Purana Sangraha* (An old Kannada Epic), *Ananda Deepike*, *Ananda Mata* (Bankimchandra's Nationalist novel), *Ananda Ramayana*, *Ananda Lahari*, *Ananda Saamrajya*, *Aryaka* (The Aryan), *Arya Keerthi – Part 1 and 2* (The Fame of Aryans), *Arya Dharma Deepa*.... Thus the majority of the texts are oriented towards religion. *Bhagavadgite* was also a much-circulated text; there are seven or eight publications of it. There are twelve books, which have word Bharata in their title (Sangali, 2000). On looking at these titles, we can say that religious discourse too used the new technology to fix its boundaries and establish a new way of binding its members.

Let me take up the issue of the Lingayat community and examine it briefly. Veerashiva Maha Sabha was established in 1905 itself, to promote the cause of the Lingayats. It used to have yearly conferences, and at the reports of these conferences make it clear that the community was trying to modernize itself. The Association mainly aimed at educating the members of its community, and also at garnering important positions in the newly emerging modern institutions. For that, it established various schools, colleges and also hostels (mostly with free boarding) for the students of its community. A cursory look at the biographies of the elite, educated Lingayats of this period would reveal this point clearly.<sup>37</sup> There are nearly thirty books on Vachanas, Veerashaivism, Shaiva texts and the Lingayat community. Hardekar Manjappa had prepared a bibliography of magazines and journals related to the Lingayat community from 1860 to 1934. Ninety-two periodicals had come out during this period (Bhoosareddy and Venkareddy, 1995: 156-162). Hardekar Manjappa ventured into this to disprove the theory that Lingayats were not taking interest in Kannada. If we ask the question, who were the readers of these periodicals, then the obvious answer would be that they were the community members. I don't think the number of periodicals of the same period

on Kannada and Karnataka, or literature in general would be so many. Though no bibliography of the periodicals of that period is available, the one prepared by Havanur shows that the number of periodicals on Kannada and Karnataka, or literature in general does not cross twenty-five (Havanur, 1993: 71-82).

When histories of Kannada literature were emerging, Lingayats were busy with constructing the history of Lingayat writers. Gubbi Murugaradhya, the author of the novel *Shringaara Chaturyollaasini* (1896), at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, has given an exhaustive list of Kannada writers who belong to the Lingayat community. Sri Guru Siddappa Bellary has also written a book on *Lingavanta Kavigalu Avara Kritigalu* (Lingayat Poets and their Works). What all these suggest is that there were competing constructions of communities at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. A modern Hindu community, a modern Lingayat community, a Kannada community, an Indian community were all emerging in that turmoil. It is not that they were either mutually exclusive or that one was pitted against the other, though I characterize them as competing. For instance, Gubbi Murugaradhya's attempt to list Lingayat Kannada writers is at the same time part of an attempt at inscribing Lingayats into the history of Kannada literature, and constructing a history of Lingayat Kannada writers. These constructions were competing for hegemony. The memberships of multiple communities led to prioritizing them. If there were multiple subject positions that were available to a Kannada reader during that period, which one was chosen in a given context and why, is a question that arises. These constructions were competing for hegemony, and over a period of time, might have accepted the hegemony of one over the other. The question, then, is what the relationships among these various constructions are: what is the relationship between Kannada nationalism and Indian Nationalism? what is the relationship between the Lingayats and Kannada Nationalism, and between the Lingayats and Indian Nationalism? But as these questions are beyond the scope of my present study, I shall limit myself to raising these questions, as these are very important in understanding how a particular discourse emerges hegemonic when



there are other competing discourses. Now I shall shift to the issues concerning B.M. Srikantia and the modernization of Kannada language and the politics of it, against this background of the construction of the history of Kannada language, literature, and Karnataka.

### III

By B.M. Srikantia's time the ground had already been prepared to launch Kannada into Modernity. Kannada Sahitya Parishat had been established with the patronage of the Maharaja of Mysore to take up the work. B.M. Srikantia actively participated in the activities of the Sahitya Parishat. He was also responsible for introducing the Kannada Department at the Mysore University, in 1926. He was trained in English and was teaching in the English Department, but he took a keen interest in establishing a postgraduate department of Kannada in Mysore University.

Though the Missionaries and British Administrators had done a lot of work that led to the formation of a Kannada community, much still remained to be done. We need to see B.M. Srikantia's writings and work in this context. Before examining the way he was trying to mould Kannada, let me briefly touch upon his attempts at writing a history of Kannada literature and of language, and also of Kannada metrical forms.

B.M. Srikantia's *Kannada Sahityada Charitre* came out as Part II of *Kannada Kaipidi* (Hand-Book for Kannada) in 1947, published by Mysore University. There were attempts earlier to write the history of Kannada literature by Rice, Kittel and R. Narasimhacharya as already mentioned. Though B.M. Srikantia's work spans over two hundred pages, it has not been identified as an important work on the history of Kannada literature, though it had four reprints (1953, 1960, 1967 and 1983 in collected works). In spite of its reprints, many do not know that he was also an historian of Kannada literature. Some of the reasons for this have been discussed by others. The main reason that has been identified is that this work fails as a history, and that

it is more of a textual analysis of excerpts of texts from selected authors. The focus is more on evaluating texts, or parts of texts. The details regarding an older writer that any history of literature should provide had already been given by R. Narasimacharya. Therefore, Srikantia might have focused more on what people call “Sahrudaya Vimarshe” (criticism for an empathetic reader) in his attempt at writing the history of Kannada literature. It is not that he was not aware of what a history of literature should be. While reviewing E.P. Rice’s *Kanarese Literature* that came as part of The Heritage of India Series, in *The Mysore University Magazine* (1919), he states what a good history of literature should contain. He thinks that merely providing details of a work is not good enough, and the independent scholarship is called for. He finds fault with E.P. Rice on this account:

Good as we find the book to be, we should like to offer a few suggestions for the next edition. Practically all the main facts on the subject so far established by research have been gathered into the book, but we miss the note of authoritative and independent scholarship. There is no real criticism, worth the name, of individual writers of the first rank (Srikantia, 1983: 832).

I think his attempt at writing a history of Kannada literature is corrective of this aspect that was missing in the other histories of Kannada literature. The number of reprints that the book underwent was not because it provided the history of Kannada literature but because of the textual analysis (criticism) he had provided of the “writers of the first rank.”

Srikantia’s *Kannada Chandassina Charitre* (A History of Kannada Prosody) was published in 1936 as part of *Kannada Kaipidi Part I*. In this, he tries to classify metrical forms available in Kannada literature into two: 1. Those borrowed from Sanskrit and 2. those close to forms found in other Dravidian languages. His scholarship not only of Old Kannada and Sanskrit literatures but also of Telugu and Tamil literature can be seen in this work. It stands out as a good comparative work too. Though he did not write a history of Kannada language independently, he wrote a



chapter on “The history of Kannada language” in *Kannada Kaipidi* along with T.S. Venkannaia. He has also edited, with the help of V. Seetaramaiah and K.V. Raghavacharya, a collection of excerpts from epigraphs, old Kannada epics, folk poems and new Kannada poems that are related to the issue of Kannada language and are description of the Kannada-speaking regions. This text has seen 11 reprints so far. This was also a part of the process of lifting the religious texts belonging to various historical periods out of their context and making them a part of the Kannada tradition. Apart from these activities, it is also important to look at his attempts at shaping a new Kannada language.

B.M. Srikantia placed a proposal, to reform the Kannada script before Sahitya Parishat, in 1936. D.V. Gundappa who was the then Vice-president of the Parishat accepted it and organized a special conference on “Akshara Samskarana” during that year’s Vasantha Sahityotsava (Literary festival during Spring). A committee was formed to collect the views of people from all over Karnataka. A.R. Krishna Shastri was the coordinator of the committee. The conference was chaired by B.M. Srikantia. Experts in Printing technology, Publishers, Printers, people who had conducted experiments on the Kannada typing-keyboard, and others attended the conference. The conference looked at the report placed by the committee and passed a resolution which rejected the argument that the Kannada language should adopt the European script, or Devanagari to suit the needs of modern technology, though it called for reforming the Kannada script to suit the needs of technology. However, ultimately, many of the recommendations of the conference were rejected, and those who believed in retaining the script as it was-and in devising suitable printing types and typewriters for it-had their say in the matter.

But B.M. Srikantia was successful in shaping a new language. He paved the way for using *Hosagannada* (New Kannada) for modern poetry. It is interesting to look at the kind of notions he held about *Hosagannada* and the way he wanted to shape it. I have culled out his views on language from his various writings to analyze its politics.

His speech delivered at Vidyavardhaka Sangha, Dharwad (December 1911) is memorable, and is quoted even today with regard to the upliftment of Kannada. He clearly rejected the nationalist argument of having a single language for the whole of India. He used the theory that the development of a civilization was related to language. He also rejected the view that English should be the language of India, arguing it to be impractical to teach English to all Indians, though it was necessary to use English with the British rulers (Srikantia, 1983: 245). He felt that there was no need to wait for the time till all Indians learnt English and advocated the use of native languages for communication till then. In this, he proposes a clear diglossia that Kaviraj talks about.<sup>38</sup> For political activities, nationalist issues, and inter-regional (*praantya*) activities, he accepts the use of English. Within the region (*praantya*) for the use of the education of children, women and Okkaligas (Sudras), Srikantia says that we need the respective native languages (Srikantia, 1983: 246). With regard to the reasons for choosing English, he lists the activities for which it is needed. In the case of the native languages, instead of listing the activities for which they are to be deployed, he identifies groups of people to whom they must be taught. If we see who is left out of that group-of children, women and Okkaligas-some points become clear. It is, obviously enough, the adult men and non-Sudras, who are left out of the group for whom the native language is meant. Not all, but only upper-caste adult men, are advised diglossia. Or, can we say that the second group should keep off the activities listed for the first that children, women and Sudras are not to participate in political and national activities? There is another assumption that operates with respect to the native language and its implied users. When Srikantia talks about educating children, women and the Sudras in the native language, the assumption is that the teacher is adult, male and non-Sudra, and the children, women and Sudras need to be educated by the adult male non-Sudra. Clearly, we can see here that the adult male from an upper-caste is assuming the role of the mediator between power (the rulers with whom he has to use English) and the ordinary people, and also between the nation and the region.



Further, Srikantia clarifies that he is not against Sanskrit, even as he favours the native languages. He says that Sanskrit is our ancestor's language, the language of the Aryans; it contains the knowledge helps us understand the past, the present as also to plan our future. He says that the educated have to learn all the three languages (Srikantia, 1983: 246-47). Subsequent to his comments on Kannada poetry, he returns to the question of how *Hosagannada* should be.

Srikantia recommends the use of *Hosagannada*. Old Kannada or Sanskrit words not much in use should not be used with *Hosagannada*, he says. This *Hosagannada* should avoid *gramya* (rustic language), and should be the language spoken by the educated and upper-caste people (Srikantia, 1983: 254). If this is to be the standard language, could it be made acceptable to the people? He says that if this Kannada is used for writing books, then with printing and schooling it will reach the others. He also poses to himself asks the question, "Why do we need to filter and standardize the language being used now?" His answer is "So that all can read this language. The time when we wrote only for Kings and Pandits is gone. Now women, men, children, adults, Brahmins, Sudras all read, so we have to use the new language so that they can understand it" (Srikantia, 1983: 254).

This argument is further elaborated in his article "Kannadakke Ondu Kattu" (A boundary/rule for Kannada).<sup>39</sup> He says that it is essential for the progress of the country that the English-educated elite should convey the knowledge they have obtained through English to the others through the native languages. For this, he says a fixed Kannada is needed. What is this fixed Kannada? It is normalizing the Kannada now in use. He calls for using a "middle" language between Old Kannada and the Kannada spoken by the people. He is aware that there are several varieties of spoken Kannada and that it varies according to region as also according to urban/rural residence. He calls for simplifying the language to make it understandable to the people, while at the same time he cautions that we should not make it rustic, but make it pure and rule bound.

He has clarified his notion of the "middle" language. He says that there are three varieties of Kannada:

1. The old one: used mainly in books and very rule bound;
2. The one in use: spoken sometimes in a new way though rule bound; and
3. Rustic language (*graamyā*): Though spoken by many, it has no rules, lacks in knowledge, is spoken in a hurry without much attention, and is in use in a few regions where it is used mostly by lower castes and only a few upper-castes.

He calls for choosing the second variety leaving out both the first and the last. Later, he talks about constructing a new dictionary and grammar to suit the new language.

In 1938, while discussing *Kaviraaja Maarga*, the first available text in Kannada, he quotes the author approvingly to say that we need to standardize the language and that should leave out the dialects. What he envisages is Tirulgannada (Juicy/pure Kannada? 'tirul' literally means essence), not the dialects in the name of desi (nativism). Writing an introduction to Deshpande Manohar's book *Prabandha Prakaasha* in 1941, he says that the author is trying to be an ardent devotee of Kannada, fighting for its upliftment and trying to make it potent (*Veeryavatt*) by cleansing it (Srikantia, 1983: 606). *Prabandha Praksasha* was written to teach the writing of Kannada essays to the students. The metaphor of potency here implies that to Srikantia the spoken Kannada is impotent requiring to be made potent. The word used in Kannada for potency is *Veerya* used in reference to men, not to women.

These were some of B.M. Srikantia's views on standardizing the Kannada language. The language chosen for standardizing it was the languages of the upper-caste men. But even as he rejects the dialects of the language, the language of upper-caste men from the other regions also stand disqualified. Thus, what remains is the Kannada spoken by the upper-caste men of the Mysore region. If a particular variety becomes the standard language for all, then the people who use it will be in an advantageous position as their spoken and written language are one and the same: they need no extra effort to pick up the standard language. For those who speak other varieties, the language they speak and the language they need to



pickup for writing become be different; a distance is created between them and the standard variety; they have to put in extra efforts to pick it up; in that sense, they will be in a disadvantageous position. Thus, the upper-caste Kannada elite used their own variant of the language as the standard language and garnered the advantages accruing from it. The work started by the missionaries and colonial administrators ended thus, with the entry of the native elite.<sup>40</sup>

Though we have looked at B.M. Srikantia's views on the standardization of language, we have not yet answered the question, why Srikantia, who spoke of rejecting old Kannada, used it in his translations from Greek plays. In the introduction to A.R. Krishna Shastry's *Sanskrita Naataka*, B.M. Srikantia says that a play that has a noble theme as well as chorus naturally needs the rhythm of a metrical form. For him, tragedies had that noble theme. Therefore, tragedy had to have a thematically suitable metrical form and language. Earlier, speaking of the use of language he had said that the new language, which is meant for all (women, children and Sudras), had to be simple. Can we assume here that the tragedies he chose to write in Old Kannada were not meant to be read by women and the Sudras, only by the Raja and the Pandit?

The choice of language in translating and writing tragedy in Kannada was driven by B.M. Srikantia's notion of tragedy but at the same time, it is also a pointer to his notion of standard language as well as his understanding of the relationship between language, gender and caste.

Thus, we see that the changes effected by the missionary and colonial authorities with regard to Kannada were given a final shape by the upper-caste elite, in the name of Language and nation. Though this fixing of the boundaries of an imagined community in a particular manner was effected through the efforts charted out in this article, it is not that the boundaries of the community were fixed forever. B.M. Srikantia might have been influential in making the others in the literary field follow in his views on poetic language, but as new historical forces emerged things did change. The Dalit-Bandaya poets who came at the end of the 1970s and 80s used a language different from the one that was used till then

(the path shown by B.M. Srikantia) in writing poetry. This use of a different language also changed the contours and content of a community.<sup>41</sup> It shows that the communities appear to be fixed only at a particular juncture in history; however, if we take an historical view we see that the boundaries are constantly redrawn.

## NOTES

1. For an elaborate discussion of canonization of this text see chapter five of my Ph.D. thesis submitted to the University of Hyderabad in 2002.

2. Here, I have tried to make a passing distinction between 'nationalist elite' and 'Kannada speaking English educated elite'. Nationalist elite has been used to denote a group of people who share a certain kind of discourse that has been identified as nationalist by Partha Chatterjee (1985). When it comes to make a distinction between the elite who are constituted by a pan-Indian nationalist discourse and the one who are constituted by a language based imagination of a community, I have used the concept of 'Kannada speaking nationalist elite' or 'native elite' to denote the latter. But we need to keep in mind that many a times these categories overlap and are not mutually exclusive.

3. See the discussion on this by Partha Chatterjee in his *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (1985) and also the chapter "Whose Imagined Community" in *Nation and Its Fragments* (1993a) where he establishes the difference between western nationalism which was popular, and Indian nationalism which was elitist in its attitude.

4. See on the question of language and colonialism Cohn (1985) and (1997), Sudhir P (1993). And also on the economy of language under colonialism in Western India see Naregal (2000). Another note has to be added here that scholars like Sudipta Kaviraj and Veena Naregal are aware of language-based



identity formation during the colonial period on the languages, they have worked, Bengali and Marathi respectively, but the language-based identity has soon given way to a pan-Indian national identity.

5. Kaviraj has analyzed the question of identity and language but the thrust of his work has been to understand the question of language in the context of colonialism and nationalism. His focus is on Bengali identity formation.

6. It is also variously called Vachana movement, Basava movement, Lingayat movement etc.

7. What the need was to consider it literature in the 20th century is a different story altogether. There are speculations that it is part of a move to integrate Lingayats with the Kannada movement in the mid 20th century, but need to be substantiated yet.

8. For an argument of this sort see Shankara Bhat (2000).

9. The names of books and other details are taken from an article on Assamese literature, *Anthology of Indian literature* by Maheshwara Niyoga (Niyoga, 1983). I have used the Kannada translation of this article.

10. As an example of such writings I give here just the books that were published last year, K.V. Subbanna's *Kaviraaja Maarga Mattu Kannada Jagattu* (Kaviraja Maarga and the Kannada World) (Subbanna, 2000), Jayaprakash Banjagere's *Kannada Raastriyate* (Kannada Nationalism) (Jayaprakash, 2000) and also some of the essays in Rahamath Tarikere edited *Kaviraaja Maarga: Saamskritika Mukhaamukhi* (Kaviraaja Maarga: A Cultural interface) (Tarikere, 2000).

11. There are three main surveys on the production of printed books, and the engagement of the colonial missionaries with Kannada-related activity and the 19th century literature in general: Srinivasa Havanur's book – *Hosagannadada Arunodaya* (2000), I.M. Muttanna's work *Bharata Saahitya Samskritige Paschatya Vidvaamsara Seve* (1987) and Dharawadakar's book *Hosagannada Saahityada Udayakaala* (1975). I am more than indebted to their painstaking work for

the factual details that I have used in this article. The intertextuality of these works is also quite interesting. I.M. Muttanna's work was the first of the three published in 1973. I.M. Muttanna is very critical of nationalists and a tone of the celebration of missionary work is evident in his writing. The one I have used for reference here is a revised and enlarged version published in 1987. The next year, 1974, Srinivasa Havanur's book was published. In Havanur's writing the nationalist tone is clearly visible though he is not critical of either missionaries or colonial administrators. It was reprinted in 2000. The reprinted version has an interesting appendix no.9 as a response to I.M. Muttanna's book (Havanur, 2000: 629-39). The very next year, 1975, Dharawadakara's book got published. It has an interesting subtitle which says that it is with special reference to North Karnataka. It seems to have come out as a reaction to Srinivasa Havanur's book, which is alleged to be slightly tilted towards south Karnataka, though that might not be the intention of Havanur. Thus, the survey of the 19th century Kannada works seems divided in its responses to colonialism as also on a regional basis.

12. Some of these facts and figures are taken from the book *Srirangapattanadalli Mattu Suttamuttalalli Christa Dharmada Ugama* by Anthappa I (1994).

13. Roughly, two kinds of missionaries can be seen during this period. Some missionaries thought if they first convert high caste people the rest will follow them, and accordingly they dressed themselves like Brahmin sanyasis. The other group of missionaries was called Pandari Swamis, who dressed like the OBC sanyasis and mainly worked among lower castes as they were more vulnerable to conversion.

14. For them, it was a nightmare to pass the native language examination. If we look at the archival materials of colonial administration at Fort St. George, we commonly encounter petitions by trainee administrators to extend time to pass the native language examination.

15. This information is based on an article by Sham in *Kannada*



*Nudi* (Vol.29, No. 2) which in turn is based on an article by Priyaranjan Sen in *Calcutta Review* (May, 1942).

16. Another spelling is also used for Fr. Cinnami, i.e. Fr. Sinnamo

17. Kesiraja's *Shabdhamani Darpana* was a 13th century text. It is said that he is a Jaina writer, but in his text we find borrowings from the Hindu mythology and also certain *Vrittas* are named after Hindu gods such as Shiva. Therefore, people have tried to call him also a shaivite, but as his king was a shaivite, it is natural that he might have tried to please him by such acts.

18. For more details on this Dictionary see *A Dictionary with a Mission: Papers of the International Conference on the Occasion of the Centenary Celebrations of Kittel's Kannada-English Dictionary* (1998).

19. See for the contribution of Christian Missionaries to Kannada Religious Literature Edward Noronha's *Kannada Dhaarmika Saahityakke Kraista Mishanarigala Koduge* (1996). And on the services of Kittel to Kannada literature K.M. Mathew's *Rev. Fr. Kittel: Ondu Adhyayana* (1994).

20. Sarvajna was supposed to be a wandering poet who might have lived in the 17th century. It is said that his poetry has elements of both Shaivism and Vaishnavism. One of the researchers on Christian missionaries of the 17th century opines that he might have converted to Christianity at Srirangapatnam, but he is not sure about this, see (Anthappa, 1994: 185-197).

21. This essay is included in its English version, in the English translation of the book *Hermann Moegling* (1997) written by Dr. Hermann Gundert in 1882.

22. Vachanas are sayings of Veerashaiva cult followers, which came as a reaction to orthodox Brahminism in the 12th century. Basava spearheaded this movement which later converted itself into a cult and now has become a caste within the Hindu religion.

23. Vaishnava Bhakti-literature that was popular since the middle ages.

24. A form of Folk play, but with classical movements performed in the Coastal region of Karnataka.

25. Some of the texts in this genre are:

1. *The Last Seige of Seringpatam: An Account of the Final Assault: May 4th 1799- Of the Death and Burial of Tippu Sultan; and of the Imprisonment of British Officers and Men; Taken from the Narratives of Official Present at the Seige and of those who Survived Their Captivity* compiled by Rev. E.W. Thompson (1923).

2. *Tippoo Sultan: A Tale of the Mysore War* by Meadows Taylor (nd).

3. *A View of the Origin and Conduct of the War with Tipoo Sultan; Comprising a Narrative of the Operations of the Army under the Command of Lieutenant General George Harris and of the Siege of Seringapatam* by Lieutenant Colonel Alenande Beatson in 1800.

4. *A Narrative of the Sufferings of James Bristow belonging to the Bengal Artillery During Ten Years Captivity with Hyder Ally and Tipoo Saheb* by Bristow (1794).

5. *A Review of the Origin, Progress and Result of the Decisive War with the Late Tipoo Sultan in Mysore* by James Salmond (1800).

6. *The Captivity, Sufferings and Escape of James Scurry, Who Was Detained a Prisoner During Ten Years in the Dominions of Haider Ali and Tipu Sahib* by James Scurry (1824)

26. Apart from this genre, there were other books too on Tippu Sultan, like Mir Hussain Ali Khan Kirmani's *Neshani Hydari's* continuation in Persian, *Shums Ul Moolke Ameer Ud Dowla Nawaub Hyder Ali Khan Bahadoor, Hydur Jang, Nawab of the Karnatick Balaghant*, which was translated into English by Col. W. Miles in 1864 as *History of Tipu Sultan*. Mir Hussain Kirmani was in the court of Tippu and he was asked by Col. Mackenzie to sketch it. Some of the other books are Mirchand's *History of Mysore: Under Hyder Ali and Tipoo Sultan* (French) (1801-1809) translated into English by V.K. Raman Menon in 1926, *Select Letters from Tipoo Sultan to Various Public*



*Functionaries including his Principal Military Commanders; Governors of Forts and Provinces; Diplomatic and Commercial Agents; & c, & c, & c. together with some addressed to the Tributary Chieftains of Shanoor, Kurnool, and Cannanore, and sundry other persons arranged and translated by William Kirkpatrick in 1811, A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental Library of the Late Tipoo Sultan of Mysore by Charles Stewart in 1809, The History of Hyder Shah alias Hyder Alikhan Bahadur Or New Memoirs Concerning the East Indies with Historical Notes by MMDLT (1848). There were other books on the History of Mysore, and on other places, like Mangalore. These details have been culled out from various sources.*

27. The *Kaifiyats* related to Karnataka are now available in a book form, see *Karnatakada Kaifiyattugalu* (Kannada) ed. M.M. Kalburgi (1994).

28. Devachandra later added a few more chapters in praise of the Mysore king and read out the text to the Queen to obtain some favours.

29. On the survey of Nepal, Assam and other regions of the extreme north, see the chapter "Misinformation and Failure on the Fringes of Empire" in Bayly C.A. (1999).

30. Even today these volumes are seen as sources of information for people working on the colonial history of Princely Mysore or of Kannada-speaking regions rather than as a certain form of colonial discourse, which tried to represent the orient in a particular way.

31. A Queen who fought the British Army against their policy that adopted children had no right to rule.

32. There were nearly 21 such small princely states in the Kannada-speaking regions. The Kannada-speaking region of the Bombay presidency was called then Southern Maratha Country.

33. See "A Selection of Canarese Ballads" in Fleet (1885), (1886), (1887), (1889), and (1890).

34. See for more detailed information on the use of Kannada

in British Administration, Banakar (1986).

35. Sources are *Sirigannada Granthakartara Charitra Kosha* (1850-1920) by Venkatesh Sangali (2000); *Kannada Granthasuchi* (1972-1977) brought out by Prasaraṅga, Mysore University; the Catalogue of Kannada Books in the British Library compiled in 1910 and a *Supplementary Catalogue of Kannada Books in the British Library* compiled by Albertine Gaur with the assistance of Srinivasa Havanur in 1985 and the Kannada book collection of Oriental and India Office Library available online at the link <http://dsal.uchicago.edu/dsal.css>.

36. Kannada University was established at Hampi, in 1991, for the same reason.

37. See S.S. Malimat (1989), Allam Sumangalam (1999), Mugi Dodda Bhaveppa (2000), Sir Saahebaru (1982), Doddappa Appa (1988), Hosamani Siddappa (1984) and Mysore Basavaiah (1985).

38. The word diglossia is used to refer to two varieties of a language but Kaviraj uses it to refer to the use of two languages within a nationalist language economy. I have used the word diglossia in the sense Kaviraj uses it, though bilingualism is the technical word for such a situation in linguistics.

39. *Kattu* means, construct, fix, boundary, rule. I think that this is used in all its senses here.

40. This point about the language of Srikantia being the upper caste language of the Mysore regions is also pointed out by H.S. Raghavendra Rao (1995)

41. Bandaya, roughly meaning protest/revolt, is a literary movement that emerged in 1970s representing back ward class aspirations. At the end of the decade Dalit writers branched off from it to fashion a new movement viz. Dalit Movement. It would be interesting to work on Bandaya - Dalit notions of the Kannada community to see how it is different from the one fashioned by the nationalist elite like Srikantia.



## REFERENCE

- Anderson, Benedict. 1991 (1983). *Imagined Communities*, London: Verso.
- Aniketana. 1999. Vol. X-4, No. XI –1, A special issue on *Kaviraja Marga*.
- Anthappa, I. 1994. *Srirangapattana Taluku Mathu Sthamuthalalli Christha Dharmada Ugama: 1648-1800* (Kannada- A Brief History of Origin of Christianity in and around Srirangapattana Taluk), Bangalore: Catholic Christara Kannada Sahitya Sangha.
- Appadurai, Arjun. 1986. "Is Homo Hierarchicus?" in *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 13, No. 4.
- Banakar, Mahadeva. 1986. *Anglara Kaladalli Kannada*, Bangalore: Dept. of Kannada and Culture, Govt. of Karnataka.
- Bayly, Susan. 1999. *Caste, Society and Politics in India*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bhoosareddy and Venkareddy, Madhu, eds. 1995. *Veerashaiva Niyatakalikegalu* (Kannada – Veerashaiva Magzines), Bangalore: Basava Samiti.
- Bucher, J. 1993 (1923). *Kannada-English Dictionary*, New Delhi: AES.
- Chatterjee, Partha. 1985. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, London: Zed Books
- . 1989. "Caste and the Subaltern Consciousness" in *Subaltern Studies*, Vol VI, ed. Ranjit Guha, New Delhi: OUP.
- . 1993a. *The Nation and Its Fragments*, New Delhi: OUP
- . 1993b (1989). "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question" in *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, eds. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, New Delhi: Kali for Women.
- Cohn, Bernard S. 1985. "The Command of Language and the Language of Command" in *Subaltern Studies*, Vol IV, ed. Ranjit Guha, New Delhi: OUP.
- . 1997 (1996). *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*, New Delhi: OUP.
- Devachandra. 1988. *Rajavali* (Kannada), ed. B.S. Sannaih, Mysore: Institute of Kannada Studies.
- Deveerappa, H. 1985. *Mysore Basavaiyanavaru* (Kannada), Sirigere: Taralabalu Prakashana.
- Dharwadakar, R.Y. 1975. *Hosagannadada Sahityada Udayakala* (Kannada: The Early Phase of Hosagannada Literature), Dharwad:

Karnataka University.

Dirks, Nicholas B. 1987. *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dubois, Abbe J.A. 1995 (1823). *Letters on the State of Christianity in India: To Which is added A Vindication of the Hindus-Male and Female*, New Delhi: AES.

Dumont, Louis. 1996. *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Fleet, J. F. 1885. "A Selection of Canarese Ballads No. 1 - The Insurrection of Rayanna of Sangolli" in *Indian Antiquary*, Vol.14, 293-303.

—. 1886. "A Selection of Canarese Ballads No.2 – The Income Tax" in *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. 15, 353-362.

—. 1887. "A Selection of Canarese Ballads No.3 – The Bedas of Halagali" in *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. 16, 356-361.

—. 1889. "A Selection of Canarese Ballads No.4 – The Crime and Death of Sangya" in *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. 18, 353-362.

—. 1890. "A Selection of Canarese Ballads No.5 – The daughter-in-law of Channavva of Kittur" in *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. 19, 413-423.

Galaganatha, Venkatesha Tirako Kulakarni. 1999. *Galaganatha Kadambari Samputa*, 6 Vols. (Complete Novels of Galaganatha), Hampi: Prasaraanga, Kannada University-Hampi.

Goru, Albert. 1985. Supplementary Catalogue of Kannada Books in the British Library, Department of Oriental Manuscripts and Printed Books, India Office Library and Records, London: The British Library.

Gundert, Hermann. 1997 (1882). *Hermann Moegling* (German), trs. Christoph Steinweg and Elisabeth Steinweg-Fleckner, Kerala: D.C. Books.

Gupta, Dipankar. 1991. *Social Stratification*, New Delhi: OUP.

Hanumanthaiah V.R. 1996 (1926). *Kurubara Charitre* (Kannada - A History of Kurubas), ed. Sudhakara, Mysore: Pratiba Prakashana.

Havanur, Srinivasa. 1993. "Kannada Sahitya Patrikegalu" (Kannada: List of Kannada literary Magazines) in *Kannada Sahitya Patrikegalu: Itihasa-Vartamana*, ed. Baraguru Ramachandrappa, Bangalore: Karnataka Sahitya Academy, 71-82.

—. 2000 (1974). *Hosagannadada Arunodaya* (Kannada: The beginnings of New Kannada), Bangalore: Pustaka Pradhikara.

Jayaprakash. Banjagere. 2000. *Kannada Rastriyate* (Kannada), Bangalore: Krantisiri Prakashana.



- Joshi, Shamba. 1999. *Shamba Kriti Samputa 6 Vols.* (Kannada – Complete Works of Shamba Joshi), ed. Mallepuram G. Venkatesh, Bangalore: Kannada Pustaka Pradhikara.
- Kalburgi M.M. 1988. “B.M.Sriyavara Sahitya Charitreya Vicharagalu” in *Marga* vol. 1, Bangalore: Naresh and Company, 628-633.
- ed. 1994. *Kannada Kaifiyattugalu* (Kannada), Hampi: Prasaranga, Kannada University.
- Kaviraj, Sudipta. 1990. “Writing, Speaking and Being: Language and Historical Identity in South Asia”, Keynote paper for the section on “Identity in History: South and Southeast Asia”, *German Historical Congress* held at University of Heidelberg.
- . 1992. “The Imaginary Institution of India” in *Subaltern Studies, Vol. VII*, eds. Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey, New Delhi: OUP.
- . 1997, (1995). “On the Structure of Nationalist Discourse” in *State and Nation in the Context of Social Change*, ed. by T.V. Sathyamurthy, New Delhi: OUP, 298-335.
- Kittel F. 1982 (1903). *A Grammar of the Kannada Language*, New Delhi: AES.
- . (1894). *Kannada-English Dictionary*. New Delhi: AES.
- . (1895) *Nagavarma's Prosody*, New Delhi: AES.
- . 1986 (1875). *Canarese Prosody*, New Delhi: AES.
- . 1995 (1874). *Canarese Poetical Anthology*, New Delhi: AES.
- Kurthakoti K.D. 1992. *Bayalu Mattu Alaya* (Kannada – A collection of articles on Kannada Literature), Hampi: Prasaranga (Kannada University Press).
- Madtha, William et al. Eds. 1998. *A Dictionary with a Mission: Papers of the International Conference on the Occasion of the Centenary Celebrations of Kittel's Kannada-English Dictionary*, eds. William Madtha, Heidrun Brueckner, A. Murigeppa and H.M. Maheshwaraiah, Mangalore: The Karnataka Theological Research Institute.
- Mallapura B.V. 1989. *S.S. Malimataru* (Kannada), Gadag: Veerashaiva Adhyayana Samsthe.
- Mathew K.M. 1994. *Rev. F. Kittel: Ondu Samagra Adhyayana* (Kannada: A Complete study of Rev. F. Kittel), Dharawada: Kittel Kala Mahavidyalaya.
- Mugali, R.S. 1975. *History of Kannada Literature*. New Delhi: Sahitya Academi.

- Murugaradhya, Gubbi. (1896). *Shringara Chaturyollasini*, Bangalore: Kannada Sahitya Parishat.
- Muttanna I.M. 1987. *Bharata Sahitya Samskritige Paschatya Vidvamsara Koduge* (Kannada- The Service of Foreign Scholars to the Literature and Culture of India), Mysore: Sri Shakthi Press.
- Narasimhacharya. R. 1934, *History of Kannada Language*, Mysore: Prasaraṅga, Mysore University.
- . 1974 (1929) *Karnataka Kavi Charite, Vol. 3* (Kannada), Bangalore: Kannada Sahitya Parishat.
- Naregal, Veena. 2000. "Language and Power in Pre-colonial Western India: Textual Hierarchies, Literate Audiences and Colonial Philology" in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 37, No.3, 259-294.
- . 2001a. "Figuring the Political as Pedagogy: Colonial Intellectuals, Mediation and Modernity in Western India" in *Studies in History*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 17-55.
- . 2001b. *Language Politics, Elites, and the Public Sphere: Western Indian under Colonialism*, New Delhi: Permanent Black.
- Nayaka, H.M. et al. 1971-1984. *Kannada Grantha Suchi 7 Vols.* (Kannada – Descriptive Bibliography of Books Printed in Kannada from 1817 to 1968), eds. H.M. Nayaka, Deshpande K.S., Prabhushankara, Veerappa K.T., P.K. Patil and R.L. Anantharamaiah, Mysore: Prasaraṅga, Mysore University.
- Niyoga, Maheshwara. 1983. "Assamese Literature" in *Anthology of Indian Literature*, Dharwad: Prasaraṅga, Karnatak University.
- Noronha, Edward. 1996. *Kannada Sahityakke Kraista Mishanarigala Koduge* (Kannada- Contribution of Christian Missionaries to Kannada Religious Literature), Mysore: Bhagyavan Prakashana.
- Padikkal, Shivaram. 2001. *Naadu Nudiya Rupaka: Rastra Adhunikate Mattu Kannadada Modala Kaadambarigalu* (Kannada- A Metaphor of Land and the Language), Mangalore: Prasaraṅga, Mangalore University.
- Payate, Chennakka. 2000. *Mugi Dodda Bhaveppa* (Kannada), Gadag: Veerashaiva Adhyayana Samsthe.
- Prabhu, Dayananda. 1994. *Mysooru Samsthanada Chraisthara Itihasa* (Enlarged Kannada version of a French book by J. Jounet), Somavarapet: Shweta Prakashana.
- Puttappa, Patil. 1982. *Sir Sahebaru* (Kannada), Gadag: Veerashaiva Adhyayana Samsthe.
- . 1984. *Hosamani Siddappa* (Kannada), Gadag: Veerashaiva



Adhyayana Samsthe.

Raghavendra Rao, 1995. *Haade Haadiya Toritu: Bendre, Kuvempu, Putina* (Kannada- A Comparative critical study of D.R. Bendre, Kuvempu and P.T. Narasimhachar), Bangalore: Kannada Sangha, Christ college.

Rice, B.L. 1985. *Nagavarma's Shabdanushasana*, New Delhi: AES.

Rumale, Mrithyunjaya. 1999. *Allam Sumangalamma* (Kannada), Gadag: Veerashaiva Adhyayana Samsthe.

Saki, 1998. *Making History: Karnataka's People and their Past*, 2 Vols. Bangalore: Vimukti Prakashana.

Sangali, Venkatesha. 2000 (1959). *Sirigannada Granthakartara Kosha* (Kannada), Bangalore: Kannada Book Authority.

Shankara Bhat D. N. 2000. *Kannadakke Beku Kannadadde Vyakarana* (Kannada: Kannada needs a grammar of its own), Mysore: Bhasha Prakashana.

Shantarasa. 1988. *Doddappa Appa* (Kannada), Gadag: Veerashaiva Adhyayana Samsthe.

Subbanna, K.V. 2000. *Kaviraja Marga Mattu Kannada Jagattu* (Kannada), Heggodu: Akshara Prakashana.

Sudhir P. 1993. "Colonialism and the Vocabularies of Dominance" in *Interrogating Modernity: Culture and Colonialism in India*, eds. Tejaswini Niranjana, Sudhir P. and Vivek Dhareashwar, Calcutta: Seagull.

Tarikere, Rahamat ed. 2000. *Kaviraja Marga: Samskritika Mukhamukhi* (Kannada), Hampi: Prasaraanga, Kannada University.

Tharakeshwar V.B. 2002. Colonialism, Nationalism and the "Question of English" in Early Modern Kannada Literature, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation submitted to University of Hyderabad.

Venkatarao, Alur. 1974. *Nanna Jeevana Smritigalu* (Kannada – Memoirs of My life), Dharawada: Manohara Grantha Maala.

—. 1983 (1919). *Karnataka Gata Vaibhava* (Kannada - The Golden Past of Karnataka), Bangalore: Directorate of Kannada and Culture.

—. 1999 (1957). *Karnatakatvada Vikasa* (Kannada – The Development of Karnatakatva), Bangalore: Kannada Sahitya Parishat.

Weigle, Gottfried. 1997 (1846). "On the Canarese Language and Literature" (Gernam, tr. Karen Schere) in *Hermann Moegling*, Hermann Gundert, Kerala: D.C. Books, 268-291.

## **Cinema as a Site of Nationalist Identity Politics in Karnataka**

**M. Madhava Prasad\***

Political life, in post-Independence India, has been fundamentally defined by conflicts over national identity. India, a political unit constituted by the combined imaginations of colonial rulers and nationalists, was sometimes seen as representing a broad civilizational unity among a number of national identities. On the other hand, given the compulsions of the colonial form of the state that was inherited by the nationalists, India itself had to be conceived as a nation, to fall in line with the new global order of nation-states. The idea that India is a nation rather than a federation seems to have acquired the status of inviolable truth in the course of the last 50 years of its existence as a Republic.

The contradictions involved in such an overlay of nationalities erupted into a major conflict soon after Independence when movements for the re-organization of the territory into linguistically defined states began to put pressure on the Central government. The Congress party, which before Independence, had endorsed the idea of India as a multinational-state, began after 1947 to consider all such nationalities as “regionalist” threats to its own authority. Nehru adopted a stance of indifference towards these nationalist aspirations<sup>1</sup> until mounting pressure from the regions, especially the southern states, forced his government to reconsider its hostility to linguistic re-organization. Throughout the Nehruvian era, India stood undecided between two choices: a Soviet-style

---

\*Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad



federation of nationalities or a mega-nationalism that subsumed and disavowed or re-articulated under the sign of Hinduism, the nationalisms of its component regions. Significantly, the first choice would be based on according language the primary role in determining national identity whereas the second was a highly risky venture: would Indian nationalism seek a new basis of identity arising from the project of building a modern nation, or would it fall back upon the unacknowledged but sub-cutaneously operative equation between India and Hinduism?<sup>2</sup> In any case, backed by the desire of the Anglophone colonial elite, which stood firmly by the "idea of India," successive governments have consolidated Indian nationalism and correspondingly invested the term regionalism with a durable hegemonic meaning.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, in the last half century or so, we have seen the consolidation of an Indian nationalism. This nationalism has vacillated between a modern, constructivist self-conception to one based on the initially disavowed, but increasingly assertive grounding in Hinduism, and now appears to be settling into the latter. Thus, while discussions about globalization refer, in somewhat optimistic haste, to the supposed decline of the nation-state, in India we are witness to the depredations of a classical form of nationalist self-assertion based on the equation of religion with national identity. We have by no means left behind the era of nationalist aspiration: rather, if we are to respond fully to our situation, we cannot avoid the task of thinking about the disavowed nationalist aspirations of the linguistic regions. Nationalism everywhere is based on one of three criteria: language, race, or religion.<sup>4</sup> Of these, language is undoubtedly the most democratic, at any rate the least dangerous option, involving as it does a skill that can be acquired rather than a mark of birth that is permanent, indissoluble and non-transferable.<sup>5</sup>

The following argument, about Kannada cinema and the position of its foremost star, Rajkumar, as a quasi-political figure in Karnataka, is an attempt to understand the cultural politics of the southern Indian states, in particular the tendency in these states for film stars to acquire political power, as a phenomenon arising

precisely out of the contradictions stemming from the above-mentioned difficulties surrounding the question of (national) identity. In this paper my purpose is to present the story of one of the most significant events in the history of Kannada cinema - the phenomenal rise of the actor Rajkumar to the status of a National hero-as an integral part of the political-ideological history of India. All over India, film stars have exploited their popularity to make political careers for themselves. But in the south, this phenomenon goes beyond the mere deployment of cultural charisma in the political field. In the south, two states, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh have seen parties formed by film stars winning elections and consolidating their position as regional powers. Their rise has coincided with the decline of the Congress party's fortunes in these states. There have been many attempts by sociologists and political scientists to understand this unique phenomenon, for which there is hardly any parallel elsewhere in the world.<sup>6</sup> It has been suggested that cinema, as a powerful modern audio-visual medium of communication, is capable of wielding a powerful influence on human minds thanks to its photographic realism, and is particularly effective on the minds of the gullible, illiterate masses, who take all that is shown on screen for reality!

The instance of Karnataka does not really fit the classic model of film-star politicians that has emerged from the above and other discussions of the phenomenon. For one thing, Rajkumar never contested an election, never started his own party, and never became chief minister of the state. One of the problems with existing accounts is that they consider significant only those moments in which stars have actually come to power as chief ministers of the states in question. In the early 1980s, in the immediate aftermath of the historic agitation for according primacy to Kannada in education (the so-called Gokak agitation), Rajkumar was at the height of his popularity, having joined the agitation and infused it with new energy. Rumours about his political ambitions were rife. Fans everywhere were loudly demanding that he enter politics to save Kannada and Karnataka.<sup>7</sup> But in the end, the film star, known



to be a reclusive, devout person, stayed away from electoral politics. This in no way affected his popularity; it only prevented it from being deployed on another platform. Thus, in Karnataka we have on the one hand, a film star whose popularity with the masses is comparable to that of his counterparts in the other southern states, and on the other the fact that unlike them he has remained aloof from electoral politics. This has led some people to the conclusion that Karnataka was not a conducive ground for such a move, because its political culture is very different from that of its neighbours. However, it is doubtful whether *any* territory is naturally suited to the emergence of film star politicians. Even after MGR's success in Tamil Nadu, nobody suspected that N.T. Rama Rao was going to do the same in Andhra Pradesh, until it actually happened. We should thus desist from applying outmoded notions of cultural predilection in our attempt to understand this unique *historical* phenomenon.

Thus we are not interested in trying to find out the real reasons why Rajkumar did not enter electoral politics. Rather, our aim is to take advantage of this very exception, this difference, to pose a different sort of question. For, what the case of Rajkumar makes clear is this: that irrespective of whether they ended up in politics or not, film stars in the southern states took on, or perhaps, had it thrust upon them, a supplementary role of political representation. In other words, what I am saying is that there is a political dimension to Rajkumar's career as much as to those of N.T. Rama Rao and M.G. Ramachandran, and that culmination in electoral victory is only a secondary feature of that dimension and not its primary manifestation. An examination of Rajkumar's career enables us to see how even the other two stars were political figures *well before* their entry into politics.<sup>8</sup>

A brief review of Rajkumar's professional career would be useful here.<sup>9</sup> Born Muthuraju, Rajkumar started his acting career in a theatre company, in the footsteps of his father. In the early 1950s, while he was touring with the company, he got a call to appear in Madras (at that time the foremost centre of film production in the south) for an audition for a Kannada film. He got

the part, that of the hero in the film *Bedara Kannappa* (1953), already a successful play performed by the Gubbi company, based on the legend of a hunter who worships Shiva with an obsessive devotion that leads him to offer his own eyes to the god. It is a remarkable tale of the triumph of *bhakti* over orthodox institutionalized religion, current in many regions of south India at least since the 13th Century, when Harihara composed his *ragale* on Kannappa, which is one of the main sources for the narrative. The film brought together a group of actors, Rajkumar, Pandari Bai, Balakrishna, Narasimha Raju and others who were to appear regularly in Kannada films for several decades to come. One of the interesting facts about this era is that the theatre companies were still lucrative, cinema had still not fully overtaken drama as entertainment. Indeed, the actors, having entered films, proceed to set up a theatre company of their own, called *Kannada Chalanachitra Kalavidara Sangha* to earn a living during breaks from film-making. Films themselves were usually based on successful stage productions.

Actors in theatre companies had to take on many kinds of roles, but some were moulded from the beginning for particular types of roles. There was always someone who played the role of prince or king, there were those young boys who played the roles of women before companies, faced with competition from cinema, started to hire women (the Telugu actor Nageswara Rao was one such and Rajkumar too had appeared in women's roles early on), those who handled the comedy interludes, etc. This kind of type-casting was maintained more or less intact by the film companies, as long as circumstances allowed it. Theatre actors were known as *bhagavatars*, and they cut their hair in a particular fashion, which was associated with being an actor: longish hair curling in (sometimes out) at the edges, just around the neck. Rajkumar, known for his handsome looks and muscular body (fit for the, usually mythological, roles that he had to take on) was an actor in Subbaiah Naidu's theatre company when he was called to Madras by Gubbi Karnataka film company, and had continued to sport his *bhagavatar* crop, since his first few films, based on



pouranic themes, required it anyway. In his autobiography, Rajkumar recalls how he came round to getting rid of his *bhagavatar* crop, which was preventing him from taking on modern roles. He was chosen to play the role of a doctor in the film *Rayara Sose*. Pandari Bai, the producer of the film, was hesitating, wondering how to tell him that he had to cut his hair. When he finally learns about the requirement, he tells the informer with firm determination, “Nanu crop madisikondur pant haki part madlebeku,” to the delight of the producers, who were afraid he might refuse.<sup>10</sup>

What constitutes a “lead role” in the discourses and practices of company theatre is not always self-evident. According to the conventions of the popular theatre, an actor like Rajkumar, thanks to his looks and youth, would usually play the role of the king, prince, or a god. Of course, the theatre company, like the early film studio, being a proprietary concern, an actor would eventually have to play any role he was offered but it suited the companies to train different people in different skills. However, this did not necessarily mean that the lead role had great prominence in the play. The action may well be focused around another character, usually a female character, but the *symbolic* centre of the narrative was a male role, with royal or other exceptional attributes, and for this reason, the company’s leading actor would play this role. In social dramas, a similar distinction between symbolic centrality and narrative prominence can be seen. We can illustrate this by reference to one of Rajkumar’s early films, *Rayara Sose* (1957). Rajkumar’s identification with mythological parts, had its corollary: other actors were being chosen for social roles. Commenting on those early days, when his company was making a social with Udaykumar, Rajkumar remarks, “Aaga naaninnu samajika chitragalallina paathrakke oppuvantha manushyanaagiralilla”<sup>11</sup> (In those days I was not yet fit for roles in social films). He also cites unnamed critics who were asking why Rajkumar was insisting “on putting on trousers and acting in socials? Can’t he be dignified and stick to bhakti films?”<sup>12</sup> We have already seen how, being his first social, *Rayara Sose* required the hero to get a new

haircut. Rajkumar's casting in the film demonstrates the difficulties attending the conception of a social world within which an actor of Rajkumar's training and reputation could find a role. The story revolves around the trials of a young couple and their troubles with the dowry demands made by the parents of the boy. Rajkumar could have played the role of the young married man, but this role was given to Kalyan Kumar, the actor who in that time, was more likely to be associated with "social" roles. Rajkumar plays a role of great symbolic significance, that of a doctor, a modern figure by definition within the film's ideological field, who functions as a good model of modernity, and helps to nudge the conflict towards resolution. It is a strangely marginal role, in spite of its symbolic significance. The role he plays functions as the locus of benign modernity, a crucial element in the film's narrative.

Let us look at another example, *Sodari* (1955). This is a historical romance, based on a narrative about the trials of a queen who, abandoned by her husband, seeks refuge in her brother's kingdom, only to be oppressed in her brother's absence by his wife. Note that the title refers to this brother-sister relationship, although Rajkumar plays the husband's role (and gets top billing in the credits). Here Rajkumar is the king who gives everything away to his subjects when the kingdom is hit by famine, and when the coffers are empty, quietly leaves the kingdom, unable to bear the sufferings of his family and his people. The main part of the story has very little to do with him. Indeed, after the first few minutes, he simply disappears from the narrative and is shown once or twice wandering about in the guise of an ascetic. He returns only at the very end. The crucial thing is that despite this relative marginality from the point of view of the unfolding story, Rajkumar's role is *central* in a strictly symbolic sense, which is to say that the king, even in his absence, is the organizing locus of the narrative. And it is important for the symbolism that the husband of the queen is this central figure, rather than her brother.

What I am trying to convey through these examples is a certain logic of casting on the popular stage, which continued to operate in the cinema in the early years. The film company at this stage is



very much under the control of the producer, whose authority is similar to that of the drama company proprietor. Actors were assigned to particular types of roles and had to play them irrespective of the relative importance of the role in a particular narrative. Given the preponderance of mythologicals and historical romances, there were always one or two actors who specialized in the roles of royals, which required good looks, a fine physique, sword-fighting skills, training in wrestling, etc.<sup>13</sup> Such actors won popular appreciation for their special skills, in particular for their ability to portray a range of emotions, while the ability to wield the sword skilfully was a difficult skill and had its own admirers. Honorary titles conferred on such actors often referred to their abilities, and indicated the recognition accorded them by the public. Rajkumar was given the title of Natasarvabhouma (previously applied to renowned stage actors like Varadacharya) at a function to mark the release of his hundredth film by the legendary man of the stage Gubbi Veeranna himself, thus continuing a theatre tradition in cinema and acknowledging that cinema had subsumed and overtaken the popular stage as a form of mass entertainment.

What we have to trace in Kannada popular cinema is the slow movement away from such theatrical conventions and customs, towards a different kind of logic where the central figure acquires an importance over and beyond the symbolic importance accorded by the drama itself. There are some characteristics of film technology itself that contribute to such a possibility: in the theatre, acting ability was gauged by such tangible features as dialogue delivery, and the grosser gestures; the actor's face, although not unimportant, did not constitute an element of the narrative process quite in the same way as it did in the cinema. The face, the body in its physical presence and detail, these became new elements that added something to the narrative, something that may well have gone unremarked by the audience, but would nevertheless have had a tremendous impact, drawing audiences to the cinema and away from the stage, irreversibly. Another feature deriving from the nature of the technology is the unprecedented fact that the same images would be seen across the length and breadth of a linguistic

region, simultaneously. This effect of simultaneity contributed immensely to the emergence of a new sense of (linguistic) community around the institution of cinema.

In discussions of the political impact of south Indian cinema, writers sometimes imply that film-makers and actors colluded to exploit the power of the cinematic image to produce popular hero figures with a powerful influence over the minds of the public. Such explanations do not sufficiently account for the way film-makers were responding to audience reactions, which privileged the recognition factor, the continuity they were able to establish from film to film when they saw the same faces re-appear in different films. Cinema doubles the actor's persona. In popular drama, we have the great actor and the many roles he has performed. In the cinema, it is as if between these two aspects of the actor's life, there appears a third, as if the actor is doubled so that an indestructible persona arises from the real actor and his roles, to transcend and survive every particular instance of his appearance. Once this doubling is accomplished, it is that persona that henceforth acts, not the real person. This is a universal phenomenon, as is witnessed by the rise of star systems in every popular cinema industry.<sup>14</sup>

But while there are star systems in many parts of the world, in south India the male star (the one who comes from the stage having played the roles of royals and other heroes), comes to be ascribed some of the authority that belongs to the roles he plays. As already mentioned, this is usually understood by critics as a sign of the audience's gullibility. According to this view, the illiterate audiences think that Rajkumar is actually a superhuman hero, whose exploits have been filmed for their benefit. Widely prevalent though it is, this is a ridiculous argument. For, of course, Rajkumar is not the only hero who accomplishes such superhuman feats in the movies, so one has to explain why the other stars don't impress the people that much. Besides, it is well known that these film stars do not hide behind their roles all the time. In fact they quite happily appear in public in the most ordinary of clothes, making no effort to hide signs of age, such as a balding head, a protruding paunch, etc.



Discussions of their careers also continually harp on their acting abilities. Indeed, what people appreciate in their stars is their versatility, their ability to play a variety of roles. Thus, when an ageing star plays a college student, this is not only a sign of vanity (although it becomes that as well) but also a highpoint of *abhinaya*. It does not automatically imply that the audience believes he is 20 years old. Indeed, realistic expectations of this sort are somewhat alien to the logic of the popular cinema.

In some fashion that is related to the roles played, but is not a product of extreme credulity, one male actor acquires the status of a leader. He not only comes to symbolize the oneness of the linguistic group in question, he also becomes, within the film industry, a figure of exceptional stature who will henceforth be acknowledged as superior to all others. The industry develops a division of labour between him and other actors who start to specialize in more romantic roles, or those which border on character roles, involving, apparently, a greater acting ability. Their relations start to resemble those of an emperor and his recalcitrant *palegars* with their own monarchic ambitions. Thus we see that each of the southern film industries had a duo of actors - during a period roughly starting in the 1950s and lasting as long as the actors' careers lasted - who together dominated the industry. One of them would be a stunt hero, who would have to evolve a distinct form of the social in order to rehabilitate himself successfully; the other, more likely to be associated with socials from the beginning, would be attributed greater acting ability, a closer identification with a middle class, literate audience. Thus we have the pairs: Rajkumar/Kalyan Kumar; NTR/Nageswara Rao; and MGR/Sivaji Ganesan. Of course these pairs are not identical in all respects. For instance, in Kannada, for various reasons, the actors with an identification with the middle class were not able to hold on to their territory very successfully, as Rajkumar proved quite capable of doing both kinds of roles at an early stage. Other differences also exist, but it is nevertheless remarkable that such a division of labour was conceived as necessary by the industry, and actually remained operative for a long time. It may still be operative in certain industries.



Meanwhile, of course, the fan clubs emerged, to consolidate these meanings, to institutionalize the hierarchies, and establish a veritable government of images. The *Karnataka Rajkumar Premigala Sangha* comes into existence in Bangalore in 1977, reflecting a new trend. Although it was supposed to be a non-political organization, those present on the occasion included Shivakumaraswamy of *Siddaganga Mata* and S. Nijalingappa. Among its activities were, award of a medal named after the star, to the highest scorer in the Kannada SSLC exam, Kannada classes for non-Kannadigas and adult education.<sup>15</sup> In the beginning, such associations are multiple, small, neighbour-hood based. But in due course they turn into state-wide federations with headquarters in Bangalore where the office-bearers wield considerable power, and also manage to establish links with the stars. As a fan club office-bearer once told a journalist, “The club was reorganized when [Sa.Ra.] Govindu joined it as its president in 1983. Until then all we did was garland Rajkumar’s posters, screen his films in theatres and worship him from afar.”<sup>16</sup> Some fan club associates have turned into film producers and directors. Thus, the current state-wide Rajkumar fans’ association has thousands of branches all over Karnataka, and their members enjoy privileges that range from availability of tickets to shows to meetings with their star. The fan clubs undertake eye camps, blood donation camps and other social welfare activities (already an indication of the nature of the organization), apart from various programmes related to Kannada language and identity. Initially, stars were not involved in such associations, but as they grew in strength and combined in state-wide federations, they started to function in a more organized fashion as an arm of the star’s overall publicity and image-building machinery. However, fans’ activities usually exceed any implicit contract. Thus, fans’ activities often involve putting down rival stars, which leads to conflicts with the latter’s fans. This can take the form of spontaneous activities like throwing cowdung at the posters of rival stars’ films, which used to be a very common but unorganized practice. However, more organized fan activity tends to be more actively contributive to the consolidation of the



leader-status of the star. For instance, when the younger star Vishnuvardhan emerged in the 1970s, fan rivalries reached a point where Rajkumar fans made Vishnuvardhan get out of his car, and take part in a procession in honour of the senior star. This indicates that there is a place for others, but under the unchallenged supremacy of one person.<sup>17</sup> Other stars who in the initial years might have been his rivals, soon fell in line and acknowledged Rajkumar as the supreme figure of the industry and declared that they too were fans of his.<sup>18</sup>

We can see how the fans' association is already taking on the burden of representation, locating itself in a space contiguous with the educational system, and concentrating its efforts on education in the language of the state. If we compare this kind of fan activity to other examples from Hindi cinema or Hollywood fan clubs, we observe a crucial difference: here, the fan is *acting in the name of the star positioned as leader*. It is not a question of identifying with the star's persona, of trying to dress like him, adopt his hairstyle, mould your own life according to behavioural or moral indications garnered from his films. Rather, here, it is a relation of *mobilization*, indicating a readiness for sacrifice. Here the identification is *symbolic*, in that the star's position is unique and you do not try to imitate him (imaginary identification) but to support him, to identify with him as leader. Before the establishment of fan clubs, when such fan adulation was still in an unorganized state, the fans were known and knew themselves by the common name of *bhakta* (which should not lead us to assume that this was a relationship based on the model of popular religion, although there could well be overlaps between such practices). With the rise of the official organizations, the more formal term *abhimani* was adopted (the word *premigalu* which appears in the name of the fans' organization, seems not to have gained currency). The difference between the two terms is not to be found in their dictionary meanings as much as in the formal, respectful address associated with the latter, and the necessarily corporate identity that the fan as *abhimani* henceforth assumed, as opposed to the more changeable, more personalized status of the *bhakta*, who



tended to be alone or to belong to small neighbourhood groups. Today, official fan organizations exist for practically all male actors and even some female ones, and therefore it is difficult to conceive of a time when such fan adulation was largely unorganized. From this state we see the gradual realization of the benefits of having such associations, a realization that may have dawned upon the film distributors and other business interests before it became evident to the actor himself. It is here that we encounter the difficult question: there are such fan clubs everywhere, but why did these fans attribute to their heroes not only a superior persona that they might wish to emulate, but a superior symbolic position - that of a *leader* of sorts - which the fan does not aspire to occupy - anymore than a loyal servant of the king aspires to become king - but rather dedicates himself to supporting. In this model of fan following that has evolved, we see the inbuilt political function of this ideological fantasy, that of making believe that a nation has its own monarchic order.

In due course, the films themselves come to be reconstituted, irrespective of their particular narrative content, in a way that reflects these extra-filmic protocols. But let us first look at some early indications of the transformation that we are discussing. In *Ranadheera Kanteerava* (1960), which was made by the group of people referred to earlier, we hear a voice-over appeal to the Kannadiga audience ("*Geleya kannadigare swagathavu nimage...*"), welcoming them to the show and promising to present them with the story of Karnataka's past glory. Of course, it may be said that the story, based on a historical figure of the Mysore royal family who is reputed to have restored it to its former glory, warranted such address. True, but there is an additional element to be taken note of: previously, there is very little evidence that the Kannadiga was considered as any more than a member of a particular market, for whom films would be made in Kannada. But in the wake of the linguistic re-organization of states, there is a move to establish a more lasting relationship with this audience, appealing to its sense of national belonging. The narrative of *Ranadheera Kanteerava* itself, needless to say, is imbued with an



anachronistic Kannada nationalism, which is another indication of the film's very contemporary preoccupations.<sup>19</sup>

As the film text begins to be re-constituted around this new central figure, certain changes occur, thanks to which the continued theatrical quality notwithstanding, popular films develop a new textual logic which is only remotely connected to the theatre. Of these a very interesting development is the subordination of the comedian to the hero, such that the comedian gradually begins to embody the fan in the audience, to serve as a point of imaginary identification through which the fan can fantasize about approaching the star. In older, studio films the comedy track is often only remotely connected to the main plot, and while the comedian's role may be of a socially low-placed character, it is not tied to that of the main character. This changes with the advent of the star. We can see this happening already in a film like *Nandadeepa* (1963), where Vadiraj plays a comedy role that soon turns virtually into a Rajkumar-fan role. From the seventies onwards, the comedian becomes indistinguishable from the fan.

Another important development is that the hero/star's relationship with the heroine within the diegesis starts to exceed the bounds of a romantic relationship and acquires a paternalist dimension. Thus Rajkumar often relates to his heroines in the films as a reprimanding father figure, while he is romancing them. We can also relate this development to the fact that with the advent of the star, the character of the father becomes less and less central in the Kannada film. If we compare Rajkumar's films with a film like say *Schoolmaster* (1958), we can see an important difference: there, a father figure is strongly present, representing tradition and patriarchal values. The romantic couples are not burdened with embodying such values, they are only expected to *conform to them*. However, in Rajkumar's films, the hero himself is both the romantic youth as well as the embodiment of patriarchal, traditional values. Thus he is often seen in roles that involve a paternal positioning, such as teacher to the heroine's student (*Olavu Geluvu*); or, the songs he sings with the heroine often tend to involve preaching of morals (*Bidugade* 1973). A related aspect to this is the extreme importance



given in these films to the theme of love for the sister (which in industry lingo is known as "sister sentiment"). Most of these star films tend to have a sister (the hero's own or adopted) and it is the hero's duty to protect her, and get her settled into a conventional domestic life. This theme, which is given exaggerated importance in these films, provides occasion for the hero to exercise more concretely, his patriarchal, paternalist function. All of these - the comedian as fan, the heroine as ward, the sister as a responsibility - are narrative elements that contribute to the emergence of the textual form suited to the task of re-constructing the filmic narrative as a site for the enactment of fantasies of political representation.

The absence of a traditional father figure as embodiment of tradition may be read in two ways: one could say that precisely the emergence of the star into a position of moral and political dominance renders father figures weak, as the star transcends the familial system even as he works to protect it. On the other hand the absence of a father figure as a stable, unchallenged representative of a durable social order may also suggest that precisely the impossibility of community (defined linguistically in this case) under modern conditions, renders it difficult to make do with a traditional parental figure. The supplementary paternalism of the hero contributes crucially to the illusion of community.

We must keep in mind the fact that all this is happening in Madras, the presidency town which, in those days, functioned as the cultural and economic centre of a large territory consisting of four dominant language groups. We must think of production companies either stationed in Madras or entrenched in the economic system whose epicentre was in that city, and which were not committed to any particular language and its cultural future. Rather, they were concerned to produce films in all languages, as long as there was a significant market in those languages. Film-makers like B.R. Panthulu and L.V. Prasad made films in many languages. The question of which actors would act in which language was decided largely on the basis of ability to speak the language in question, and there was otherwise little effort in the early days of the talkies to build exclusive star systems for each language.<sup>20</sup>



However, such star systems were seen as a crucial factor in consolidating separate markets.

What is interesting about the separation of these star systems due to compulsions felt by the industry is that it is *only the male stars* who seem to move into one language or another exclusively, while the female stars are to be seen in films of several languages. Thus linguistic representativeness was a feature of the male actor's persona in a way in which it never was for the female actors. Thus, Rajkumar acts exclusively in Kannada films (and prides himself on never having accepted offers for other languages even in the early days), and NTR exclusively in Telugu films (although initially, when this logic had not yet set in, he did do a few Tamil films), and so on, while the big female stars of that era, B. Saroja Devi, Jayanthi, Savithri and others appeared in all language films. There is no mistaking the intention behind this strategy: male stars were to commit themselves to exclusive linguistic representation, and thereby to the elaboration of a national identity, while female stars functioned as exchangeable objects. This is a logic that continues to operate even today: while initially male stars may try their luck in more than one language, once they become successful, they are under compulsion to choose one and stick with it. Women, on the other hand, tend increasingly to come from elsewhere, preferably from Bombay. It is not surprising therefore that male stars are faced with questions about anything in their lives that might seem contradictory to their professed ideals: such as residence outside Karnataka.

This then is one more reason why actors in the cinema had to become more than symbolic centres of the narrative. The separate development of language-specific star systems also coincides with the increasing importance of the "social film" as the staple product of the industry. It is sometimes said that a star like NTR acquired his huge popularity because he played Krishna, Rama and other divine heroes (This is again a variant of the gullibility argument: the people think that he is really Krishna, etc.). However, mythologicals were less likely to lead to the sort of separation that we are talking about, nor did mythologicals allow for exclusive



role-identities: thus, Rajkumar played Ravana in a memorable performance that was hugely successful (*Bhukailasa*, 1958), but hardly because Ravana is a character whose attributes the actor would care to be associated with. It was the social film that called for a consolidation of the star image as a sort of brand image that served as an assurance of linguistic identity. Socials were usually made in several languages. Even if they were initially made in one language, sooner or later they would be remade in other languages. In such a situation, stars were the only guarantee of linguistic identity. While for mythological films, language is important only for communication (the stories themselves belonging to a pan-Indian heritage of pouranic literature), in the socials, language had to also figure as a marker of identity. It was not enough to speak the language, the social space had to be rendered Kannada by speech and other elements of the text.

We can see how this approach to the integration of linguistic markets relies less on a cultural notion of identity than on certain signifiers which can be added to any narrative in order for it to be successfully translated into the particular language in question. If cultural identity alone were at issue, the images would have to be characterized by regional cultural markers. *Political* markers of identity, on the other hand, involve a relation of representation. A community's identity does not reside in the concrete, positive constituent features of its singularity (this is cultural identity) - but in the ability to stand for, to represent the culture. The star as the signifier of linguistic difference is thus a purely political notion. In some cases, as with MGR, he need not even belong to the cultural group. Where he does so belong, he must go through a process of acquiring a modern image, so that he will then be able to represent his community. The star belongs to the community he represents, but at the same time, he must be separated from it, alienated, constituting an internal exterior. The classic example of such alienation in the consolidation of identity is of course the nation-state. The nation's identity is never complete without being *externalized* in the form of the state. The nation has no identity in itself: no internal substance, no cultural matter, no food or clothing



habits, nothing can really serve as guarantor of its identity, even if they serve as the basis for identity-claims. If identity were *internal* to an entity, it would be absurd to struggle for it. It is in order to acquire the alienated element that will guarantee identity that such struggles are waged: every struggle for identity is in that sense also a struggle for alienation. Thus, minority groups living in the midst of a people who constitute a majority in the given nation-state will experience their condition as intolerable, precisely because they feel trapped in the concrete, unleavened solidity of their cultural substance, whereas the state appears to offer the privilege of alienation only to the majority. Thus identity struggles are, in a way, struggles against too much identity, for the breathing space of alienation.

Against this background, let us examine an important film in Rajkumar's career, which demonstrates how the relation of representation which Rajkumar established with his audiences relies on a split that renders his cultural position dual: he is a Kannadiga, but also, by virtue of his occupation of the spaces of modernity, of which the cinema screen itself is an important example, he also becomes the Other who will represent all Kannadigas. Because of the elaboration of the star systems of south Indian cinema, there is also a corresponding importance given to the image of the star as a modern youth. This is, as it were, his *primary image*: all others, such as, in the case of Rajkumar, his portrayal of historical figures like Mayura or puranic figures like Krishna, however popular, would be subordinated to his modern, contemporary image. To understand the representational logics of the popular cinema, let us look at the film *Mayor Muthanna* (1969). Being the first film directed by the well-known director Siddalingaiah, it is significant in Rajkumar's career because it comes at a juncture when Rajkumar's image has already been established, but is still flexible enough to be varied from film to film, whereas later, a certain rigidity would be imposed as the unwritten pact between star and fans increasingly dictated the limits within which the image must operate. *Mayor Muthanna* may be said to have contributed to this transformation significantly.



The film tells the story of Muthanna (the echo of Rajkumar's real name, Muthuraju, is not accidental and in this light, the film can also be read as a rendering of the star's own rise to a position of informal leadership), a poor villager who has no family of his own (this already enables him to transcend family and move into the position of a representative), but is the adopted member of a poor peasant family. He is a simpleton, morally upright and always at hand to defend the honour of the women in the village from strangers – the film begins with a scene in which fight and chases away some hoods who are molesting a woman. A friend of his comes back from the city, having spent his student days gambling and getting into debt. Caught stealing the temple jewels to pay off his creditors, he makes Muthanna take the blame and the latter is promptly banished from the village. Arriving in Bangalore, he is witness to some criminal activities, encounters some city girls in a swimming pool, and goes to sleep under the benevolent gaze of the city's founder Kempegowda (from where he is chased away by a policeman), and is eventually befriended by a kindhearted small time cheat (Dwarakish). This friend takes him around the city, explains to him the power structure of the city administration, and shows him glimpses of the sordid lives of the urban poor. Muthanna is ripe for transformation into a leader: someone is needed to sort out the mess and the film suggests that Muthanna might be just the right man for the job. But he is still Muthanna, the village youth, in his peasant clothes and his long hair tied in a bun at the back of his head, and his endearing rustic dialect.

It is at this juncture that an amusing little scene ensues which can properly be described as coming from the film's *unconscious*, and setting the stage for the hero's move into the role of a representative. The scene happens at night, as Muthanna and his friend prepare to go to bed. They are hungry but there is no money to buy food. Muthanna gamely goes to sleep, but his friend tosses and turns, unable to bear the hunger. Suddenly he has an idea. He gets up and fetches a pair of scissors and cuts off Muthanna's hair (which he wants to sell so as to use the money to buy some food). Muthanna wakes up, screams and shouts, lamenting the loss of his



beautiful hair, but the deed is done. The important point here to be noted is that the scene happens at night, when the prospect of immediately selling the hair and procuring food is remote. (Besides, after this event, Muthanna adopts the short hair style and does not think of growing it back again). This shows that what is really at stake is the production of a new icon, the transformation of Rajkumar into an urban, short-haired persona, *without which he cannot represent the people!* As a long-haired, dialect-spouting peasant, he is himself a representation of the authentic Kannadiga subject, but for the film the question is, who will come along to represent him? As Marx said of the peasant in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, “he cannot represent himself, he must be represented.” Political representation requires a doubling, whereby the subject comes first to occupy a space quite alien to his everyday existence, an empty place of representation. The short-haired urban male is cinema’s *image* of that doubling. He will retain a memory of the village, but he will not, he cannot, remain in the subjective position of a villager. Conversely, we may say of this figure, that his urban modern appearance is pure appearance, that in substance, he is something other: a true Kannadiga.

Thus in this ingenious representation of the subject’s splitting into two, we see popular cinema grappling with the politics of representation. But the film does not only suggest that every individual in a modern state has to undergo a similar split. Rather it seems to suggest that Muthanna, by undergoing that split, spares the rest of us from a similar compulsion. Instead of every individual alienating him or herself in the empty space of the universal (citizenship), Muthanna alienates himself so that we may remain the same, authentic national subjects. Henceforth our identity is tied to his role as our representative. After this episode, Muthanna slowly emerges as the natural leader whose good works bring him immense popularity and the post of Mayor. In the final moments, the people of his village also arrive to bask in the glory of his rise to power, and he greets them like a true leader.

We have to examine these films and the heroes they created, in their historical context, rather than through a universalist sociology

that focuses on the susceptibility of the masses everywhere to powerfully articulated ideologies. In the aftermath of the linguistic reorganization of states, the nationalist address that the cinema adopts as a marketing device gives body to the linguistic nation more concretely than any other cultural form (Literature, of course, is the other site where a national identity is elaborated but this is accessible to very few people<sup>21</sup>). Any overt political expression of this linguistic national identity is constrained by the fact that the states of the republic are regarded as purely administrative entities, and politics at the state level, dominated by the Congress party at that time, was more or less a duplication of politics at the national level. No other paradigm was available, and it was only in the cinema, I suggest, that such a paradigm came to be conceived and put into effect. Thus it is not surprising that the politics of "regionalism," which has played such a significant role in Indian political life in the last few decades, has received its most effective elaboration by the parties launched by film stars. However, our point is that even before such parties are launched, what we have witnessed in the southern states is the construction, with the help of the devices of a cinema culture, of a shadow-state, a virtual system of representation within which the problem of Kannada national identity within India was able to reach a fantasy resolution. This parallel state-form *supplemented* the political life of the people with a concrete sense of national identity. A national identity is never secure unless it is objectively realised in a state form. The Indian state was not in a position to directly realise the multiple national identities that inhabited its interior territories. It is in this context that we must see the cinemas of south India being mobilized to serve as supplementary structures of representation.

## NOTES

1. See Robert D. King, *Nehru and the Language Politics of India*, Delhi, Oxford UP, 1997.
2. Sunil Khilnani has recently suggested that Nehru had forged a moral basis for Indian social unity, in place of the



religious one. See Khilnani, "Nehru's Faith", *EPW* Vol.37, No. 43, November 30 2002, pp.4793-4799.

3. The idea of an Indian nation secretes as a complement, the term "regionalism", employed in the Indian nationalist discourse to describe internal nationalisms which are perceived as a threat even when their expression is primarily cultural. The term surfaces in all kinds of places as an explanation for social problems. See for instance, Upendra Baxi, 'The Second Gujarat Catastrophe', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.37, No.34, August 24-30, 2002, pp.3519-3531, where he suggests that Gujarati regionalism is one of the causal factors for recent events there.

4. In his reflections on the question of the "nation form", Balibar has remarked that "there are two great competing routes" to conceiving the fictive ethnicity which serves as the basis for a nation: language and race. We have added religion to this list in view of the Indian experience, although it remains open whether it is indeed religion that is at issue, since racial considerations are not far removed from the thinking of the leadership of Hindu nationalism. See Balibar, 'The Nation Form', in Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*. London, Verso, 1991, pp.86-106.

5. "The language community is a community *in the present*, which produces the feeling that it has always existed, but which lays down no destiny for the successive generations. Ideally, it 'assimilates' anyone, but holds no one. Finally, it affects all individuals in their innermost being...but its historical particularity is bound only to interchangeable institutions." Ibid., p.99. Balibar shows that, precisely because of its open nature, language is never an adequate basis for national identity and thus calls up racial or ethnic supplementary features. Nevertheless, such invocations need not always take on a racist character as long as language remains the dominant factor.

6. Some of the important works that have attempted to make sense of this phenomenon are: Karthigesu Sivathamby, *The Tamil Film as a Medium of Political Communication*. Madras: New Century Book House, 1981; Robert L. Hardgrave Jr., 'When Stars Displace the Gods: The Folk Culture of Cinema in Tamil Nadu.' In *Essays in the Political Sociology of South India*. New Delhi: Usha Publications, 1979; and M.S.S. Pandian, *The Image Trap: MGR in Film and Politics*. Delhi: Sage, 1992. See also Madhava Prasad, 'Cine-Politics: On the Political Significance of Cinema in South India', *Journal of the Moving Image*, No. 1, Autumn 1999, pp. 37-52 for a discussion of the south Indian situation in general and some other historical and theoretical issues that are pertinent to the present discussion.

7. See *Indian Express*, 23 April 1982, where it was rather prematurely reported that Rajkumar had joined politics, because he had entered the fray of the Gokak agitation. The film star was offered a Lok Sabha seat and many other attractive rewards, but he did not oblige. When fans shouted slogans pressing him to start a party or join one of the existing ones, he replied in the humble tones of a man who was deeply conscious of his lack of formal education: "Nimma rajkumar rajakiyakke barolla antha nimagella chennagi gothu. Mathe mathe yaake adanna kelthira? Ishtakku naanu rajakiyakke bandu enu madalikke agutthe? Adeno parlimento eno antharalla, alli enadaru kelidare nanu mathanadalikke agathye? Nive heli. Addarinda naanu khanditha rajakiyakke barodilla. Nimma rajkumar eega idda hage irthane. Eno janara samasyegalive, bhasheya samasye ide andaga hun anni, nuggona, ashte." [You all know very well that your Rajkumar is never going to come into politics. Why do you keep asking the same question? In any case what can I possibly do in politics? If they ask me something in that parliament or whatever they call it, will I be able to give an answer? Tell me. I certainly will not come into politics. Your Rajkumar will remain as he is now. If the people are facing a problem, or there is a problem to do with the language, say the word and we'll plunge in, that's all.]



*Vijayachitra*, December 1982, p.16

8. Of course, this is obvious in the case of MGR, who was allied to the DMK for some time before launching his own party. However, even in his case, we can identify a middle period in which he had transcended his role as an instrument of the DMK's political project, but had not yet launched his own party. It is in this middle period that his image as a National hero is consolidated. See Sivathamby, *The Tamil Film as a Medium of Political Communication*.

9. The following account has been put together from many articles in the press and other sources, chief among them the star's own autobiography, serialised in the film magazine *Vijayachitra* as 'Kathanayakana Kathe' between April 1975 and January 1984.

10. 'Kathanayakana Kathe', *Vijayachitra*, October 1980, pp. 49,51. It appears to have been a delicate issue, because he is assured that the barber who would conduct the operation was from his region (*nimmakadeyavane*)! We will see later how important this iconic transition was to the politics of representation. In this context we may recall an amusing incident related by Purnachandra Tejaswi in his memoirs of his father, *Annana Nenapu*, Mysore, Pustaka Prakasana, 1997. In his youth, when the norm was to have long hair (longer than the bhagavatar's), Tejaswi defies custom and goes and gets his hair cut short, in the modern style, earning the wrath of his father. Interestingly, he also earns the nickname *talkie bola* (talkie baldie), suggesting that the movies were the source of this fashion for many: just as film stars like Rajkumar had to cut their hair short to appear modern, viewers too, seduced by this modern image, were secretly getting short haircuts and shocking their parents. No wonder that this generation was in turn shocked when its children grew their hair long in the hippy era!

11. *Vijayachitra*, October 1980, p.49

12. *Vijayachitra*, November 1980, p.27.

13. The history of "company drama" in Karnataka is well researched, although the transition to cinema, which cannot be

properly understood without reference to the professional theatre, remains to be fully explored. The following works are useful: H.K. Ranganath, *Karnataka Rangabhumi*, Mysore, Suruchi Prakashana, 1978; H.R. Ranganath ed., *Vrithi Ranga Darsana*, Bangalore: Kannada Sahitya Parishat, 1993; B.V. Vaikuntaraju, *Kannada Rangabhumi*, Hampi: Kannada Vishwavidyalaya Prasara, 1997. On Gubbi Veeranna's theatre company, see Sindhuvalli Ananthamurthy, *Gubbi Kampani*, Mysore: Suruchi, 1979.

14. See Christine Gledhill ed., *Stardom: Industry of Desire*, London: Routledge, 1991, for studies of the Hollywood and other star systems.

15. *Vijayachitra*, June 1977, p.7

16. *Illustrated Weekly of India*, pp. 10-12

17. *Vijayachitra*, January 1981, p.12

18. *Vijayachitra*, April 1982, p.9. The many facets of fan club activity are the subject of S.V. Srinivas's *Fans and Stars: Production, Reception and Circulation of the Moving Image*. Ph.D thesis, University of Hyderabad, 1997. This is a study of the fan clubs of the Telugu star Chiranjeevi.

19. Such appeals did not always indicate the film-maker's patriotism. A controversial case that is interesting in this context is that of *Shri Krishnadevaraya* (1970), one of Rajkumar's highly successful films, which promoted the idea of Vijayanagara as a Kannada empire. But its director B.R. Panthulu did not hesitate to dub it in Telugu (where, needless to say, it is a Telugu empire). Rajkumar protested to the director when he learnt of this development.

20. It appears that it took some time for this to become the norm. Thus the very first "Tamil" film was actually a bilingual film, because in it the actors reportedly spoke whichever language they happened to be fluent in: thus one character would speak in Tamil and another would reply in Telugu.

21. Rajkumar's popularity attracted many literary personalities to him. Popular writers such as AaNaKru, Gorur Ramaswamy Iyengar, ThaRaSu saw him as a leader of Kannadigas who would



help to deepen the base of the Kannada community. While they advised him against acting in certain genres of films, they appeared with him at public meetings and lavished praises on him.

## The Dynamics of Devotional Cults: Saivism in Medieval Karnataka

Rajaram Hegde\*

*Bhakti* ideology, and its *agama* rituals, characterised the Medieval religious sects of south India. We witness the formation of several devotional, *tantric* and ascetic cults during this period, which were brought under the fold of pan-Indian traditions like Saivism, Vaisnavism, Sakteism and Jainism. Several major and minor sects were affiliated to the above traditions through philosophy and *puranic* pantheons. Medieval kingdoms patronised such regionally prominent sects for different purposes. The sects also competed for material power by organising themselves under temple and *matha* institutions. This whole process has also been studied from a materialistic angle by scholars who argue that the philosophy and practice of these cults changed according to the changing material milieu of the devotees, patrons, rival sects, etc.(Nandi 1986). Thus, the *Kalamukhas*, a sect affiliated to Saivism, evolved for themselves the *matha* system, modeled after the Jainas of the Karnataka region(Nandi 1984). In the far south, popular *bhakti* saints spread the ideology of the feudal state both through the temple centers as well as through their *bhakti* hymns helping the Medieval state to consolidate and spread its ideology among all the sections of its subjects (Veluthat 1987; Narayanan & Veluthat 1987).

---

\* Reader, Department of History and Archeology, Kuvempu University, Shimogga, Karnataka



These sects also developed mutual conflicts, like the one between the Saivas and Jainas of Karnataka, as an extension of the conflicts between the material interests of their followers. The urbanisation process in Karnataka, by the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. brought out so much of socio-economic transformation that, the newly emerging urban classes and the old oppressed classes opted for a new order in Saivism called *Virasaivism*. (Nandi 1975).

R.N. Nandi is one prominent author who has theorised the *bhakti* traditions from a Marxist angle while dealing with Medieval Karnataka. In his studies, *bhakti* is conceived as an ideology or the super-structural element of a brahmanical root serving the purpose of upper class interests. Nandi equates brahminism with an upper class ideology of Medieval India. He recognises two types of brahminisms: 1) one that served the purpose of the feudal state in the form of temple based *agamic* brahminism expressed in Nayanar and *Kalamukha* traditions; and 2) *Virasaivism*, springing from the *smarta* brahmin tradition which provided an ideological expression to the new material situations as against the old order. This argument prompts Nandi to state, with regard to the *Nayanars*, *Kalamukhas* and *Virasaivas*, that, “the mission of each sect consisted in the stabilization of the brahmanical social order, dominated by the plebian temple priests, against the onslaught of the Jains...each founded by brahmanas, tried to please non-brahmanas (*Sic*) by honouring some among them.....” (1984:98-99). In order to establish control over the wealthy classes, artisans and menials, they had to adopt the Jaina ways as an antidote. This competition also got expressed into Saiva-Jaina conflict. To prove his case, Nandi makes certain generalisations on this historical process. However, the question remains whether such theoretical deductions adequately explain the dynamisms of Medieval cult-formation. In order to confirm that, we need to examine whether the generalisations articulated on this topic by Nandi can be tested in the context of a micro-region.

The present study is a micro-regional approach to this problem. This locality is situated in the core of Medieval Banavasi 12000 division, presently covering parts of Shikaripur and Sorab

taluks of the Shimoga district, and Hirekerur taluk of the Haveri district. This administrative division came into existence about the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and by the 11<sup>th</sup> century Balligave, a town near modern Shiralkoppa in Shikaripur had emerged as the administrative capital of this division. The Medieval settlements situated within a radius of 30 kilometers around this town are explored here on a village- to- village basis.

## I

### **The distribution pattern of the worshipping cults**

There was a hectic temple-building activity in this region during the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries. This unprecedented impetus in temple-building activity coincided with an urbanisation process of Medieval Karnataka.( Prasad 1977, 1992). This was one of the most active phases of the worshipping cults of Karnataka. The present micro- region had around 300 small and big temples in its different types of settlements. We have a total of around 190 temple endowment records that survive to this day.

Out of the nearly 300 small and big shrines of this region, around 200 belonged to Saivite deities, 30 belonged to Jains, and of the rest, Vaishnavite shrines formed the largest cluster consisting of around 15 independent ones along with a slightly larger number being attached to the Saiva shrines. There seem to be a larger number of Jaina temples which were later converted into Saivite and other shrines, the total of which may not exceed 20. Thus, the Saivite temples were in an overwhelming proportion. While there were three or four independent shrines for goddesses, deities like Harihara, Brahma, Buddhist deities, etc. also had a temple each. All these latter temples are to be found in Balligave alone indicating that the these gods were not as popular as the Saiva, Jaina and Vaisnava deities.

Balligave, being the largest urban political center, was the largest temple center too.(Setter 1999) An inscription here praises



this town for the peaceful coexistence of all the five cults of Hari, Hara, Brahma, Buddha and Jina. (Rice 1902: Sk 100). Inscriptions refer to a total number of around 46 temples, out of which around 27 were of Saivite deities affiliated to five Saiva *mathas*. There were three *brahmapuris* attached to different temples. There were five Jina temples and an equal number of Vaisnava temples. Vaisnava temples were also attached to *trikuta* (three-chambered) Siva temples in which the other deity was probably Brahma in the form of a *linga*. A Buddhist *vihara* and a temple for goddess Tara Bhagavati were built here in the later half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The *nadu* centers and some of the other temple-centers of this area were invariably inhabited by the Saivas and the Jainas and only occasionally by the Vaisnavas. Such centers were Udri, Bandalike, Bharangi, Chikkakereyuru, Hirekereyuru, Tilavalli, Satenahalli, Kuppaturu, Kodakani and Hire Avali. All these places, excepting Udri, had a single Jina shrine as against three to five Siva shrines. Of the above settlements, four had a separate shrine for Vaisnavite deities which were invariably attached to *brahmapuris*. Out of the rest of the slightly bigger villages, more than thirteen had one or two Siva and one Jina shrines while in rest of the villages there were only shiva shrines.

As per the foregoing figures, Saivism was deeply entrenched in all types of settlements. Saivism was the only cult followed in the smaller agrarian villages, indicating that Saivism was the sole expression of the local cultural formation. Jainism rarely found its existence in the little villages, while its presence was increasingly felt as settlements grew into a moderate trade or political centers where it found patrons among merchants and rulers, especially the female members of that section. This situation prevailed right from the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Interestingly, the *agraharas* of this area were also Saiva centers from the beginning, while Vaisnavism seems to have been patronised mainly by a section of brahmanas, especially after the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

## II

**The formation of the Saiva temple cult**

One of the of Nandi's main arguments is that the "temples, which reduced to subjection considerable farm and industrial labour, and the orthodox brahminism, which encouraged such practice, therefore became unpopular among large sections of traders, producers and manufacturers, who finally broke away from the parent society to form a new social order" (1975:45-46). The brahmanical order, structured around the temples, had despised these lower sections as *sudras*. During the 11<sup>th</sup> century, an increasing phenomenon of commercialisation in this part of Karnataka led to a money economy and urbanisation as indications of cracks in the feudal order. Urban moneyed classes, in the form of officials and traders, wanted to come out of the clutches of the temples and the brahmanical intermediaries for whom the *smarta* brahmins provided an ideological expression in the form of *Virasaivism*. This new ideology was also rendered appealing, without being genuinely intended to the oppressed sections.

Epigraphic evidence reveals that Saivism had provided an expression for a variety of social sections of urban and rural areas and had lent itself more flexibly to the contemporary social formations than the other cults. Temples had flourished unprecedentedly in a changed material condition. Nandi prefers to identify this phenomenon with urbanisation. The urban sections consisted of merchants, traders, professionals, etc. who ascended the ladder of power and status. Along with them was a class of state functionaries from these sections who had tried to give new expression to the Saiva temple-cult in the context of local ruling-class formations. This argument will be clear if we analyse the names of the Saivite gods and their patrons.

There were gods named Ramesvara, Somesvara/Somanatha and Mallikarjuna which were connected with some of the popular cults of the Medieval Deccan. God Ramesvara was the most popular deity of this part of Karnataka (Murthy and Sontheimer 1980).



Two of the other gods seem to be connected with the *Lakulisa pasupata* sect to which *Kalamukhas* of this region traced their origin. However, the total number of temples dedicated to the above deities does not cross 20 from among more than 100 epigraphic references. The rest of the gods bear the names derived from the local cults and patrons, or other rare names from Sanskrit sources. The names like Alesvara, Ammesvara, Gundesvara, Kambesvara, Pandarangesvara, etc. bear Kannada prefixes suggesting the Sanskritization of local names. Kotisvara was a name derived from the sect called *Yekkoti* which was later incorporated by the *Kalamukhas* (Chidanandamurthy. 1966:125-135). Pandarangesvara was, most probably, a Saiva version of an early form of Panduranga who is later invariably associated with Vithala, one of the prominent Vaisnava deities from the Deccan (Annigeri 1961:Hk. 32-33; Delury 1994:35).

The names derived from that of the patrons are the most interesting. These names can be broadly classified into those bearing individual bearing and those of group identities. There was a Nagaresvara temple at Balligave for the *nakhara samuha*. Inscriptions from Balligave suggest that *nakharas* were the settled merchants of that town (Rice 1902:Sk.94). The travelling traders of the same town had a temple for Gavaresvara, the name having been derived from the term *gavare*, one of the trading groups that carried goods from place to place and was generally called *banajigas*. The famous guild, Ayyavole 500, had registered a donation to this temple (Rice 1902:Sk119). The smiths had a Kammathesvara temple, the name being derived from 'kammata' or workshop (Rice:Sb 243). The oilmillers (*Telliga* in Kannada) of Balligave had got Telligesvara temple built in 1144 (Rice:Sk334). Oil millers emerge as one of the most prominent professional groups to be mentioned in the records, since oil was the most regular item of donation to the temples of this region. They were organised as the oil millers 50 (*telligaraivattokkalu*) and interestingly, they had built temples for their god when *Virasaiva jangamas* had heightened their activities. Therefore, the argument that the urban professionals like oil millers were forcefully involved in

temple-centric worship needs to be re-considered. Another interesting god was Billesvara, who was quite popular in this region. The name is derived from a martial community of the hilly tracts called *Bila* 300. A temple they had built at Kodkani was attached to a Saiva *matha* (ECS.:Sb 586). There were a few other gods who do not bear name of a profession, but can be clearly assigned to such groups. For example, the sculptors of Balligave had a temple which was dedicated to god Kusuvesvara (Rice: Sk. 112) while the guild Konavatti 500 had a Durgesvara temple at Konavatti town (Gopal 1973:Hk 28).

TABLE-I

Deities named after personal names

Date	Place	Deity	Individual name	Social background
1033	Kuppagadde (Rice.Sb 184)	Alesvara	Alayya	local ruler
1054	Balligave (Rice:Sk 118)	Somesvar	Sovisetti	merchant
-	Balligave	Kedaresvara	Kedarasakti	saint
1090	Balligave (Rice:Sk 335)	Manjesvara	Manjeyanayaka	guard
1096	Balligave (Rice:Sk 111)	Sarvesvara	Sarvadeva	local ruler
1098	Balligave (Rice:Sk 106)	Lokesvara	Lokarasa	local ruler
1098	Balligave (Sk 106)	Jogesvara	Jogarasa	local ruler
1104	Abbaluru (Fleet: )	Brahmesvara	Bomma Gavunda	village ruler
1145	Udri (Rice:Sb 138)	Boppesvara	Boppadevi	queen of a <i>nadu</i>
1155	Chikkakereyuru (Kalaburgi:102)	Biyapesvar	Biyapasetti	merchant
1159	Balligave (Rice 123)	Veera Kesava	Kesiraja	<i>dandadhipa</i>
1159	Balligave	Jagadekamallesvara	-	emperor?
1163	Bandalike (Rice,Sk 242)	Somesvaa	Sovideva	ruler of <i>nadu</i>
1167	Mayitammana- Muchadi (Rice:Sk 277)	Jagadekamallesvara	-	emperor?
1174	Bandalike (Rice:Sk 236)	Boppesvara	Boppadeva	ruler of <i>nadu</i>
1184	Kuppagadde(Rice:Sb 179)	Ramesvara	Ramayya	brahmana
1209	Hurali (Rice: 377)	Kalidevesvara	Kaligavunda	village chief
1239	Tiluvalli (Gopal,1969:42)	Savantesvara	Kalideva Thakkura	<i>savanta</i> of Yadavas
1248	Ginivala (Rice :Sb 427)	Nenesvara	Nenasideva	local chief

Individual names were assigned to gods for different



purposes: 1) The person who got a temple built for his personal god named him after his personal name. 2) Gods were named after pontiffs of the *mathas* based at the respective temples. 3) Subordinates built temples and named the god after their overlords. (see table No-1) As per **table-I** (page no.93) patrons hailed from different sections of the society.

It must be pointed out here that the personal names themselves might have been derived from that of family or local deities of Kannada origin. For example, Manja, Boppa, Nenasi, Biyapa, etc. seem to be the names of regional deities. However, in the above examples, gods were so named because they represented the personal names which they intended to perpetuate. Brahmesvara was derived from the personal name of a *gavunda* called Brahmagavunda, but it was no doubt a Sanskritised form of Bomma or Barmma, a local deity popular in *malenad* and coastal Karnataka. Savantesvara is derived from the office called *savanta/samanta* which is taken to be a personal identity. A striking feature is that except one (Kesava) all the other examples are of a Saivite affiliation indicating that no other god-head was as easily amenable for such personal and social application as Siva. The personal or caste names given to Siva clearly indicate that they revered him as their personal lord, and perpetuated their personal identity along with their lord in order to bring sanctity to the individuals and castes.

The foregoing review of the name of the Saiva gods hints at the modes of integration of the local as well as super-local cults into the fold of Saivism. The need for creating epigraphic records signifies the changing resource-status of a temple. It was done particularly when a temple was built in stone or renovated into a stone structure. Thus, the temples we have reviewed are indicators of the ascending status of individuals or communities concerned. This region was subjected to an intensive administration by the later Chalukyan rulers from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Along with the hierarchy of state functionaries who collected a number of taxes and tolls, the local *nadu* and village chiefs as well as chiefs of trading and professional groups started building and patronising stone temples through mobilising resources in the form of land,

village income, taxes, things and services. There was an unprecedented development in both agrarian and non-agrarian production, and trade in this region after the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Saivite temple institutions successfully negotiated the transformations of such a material world.

The saivite sectarian organisations in the form of *mathas*, no doubt, have played a crucial role in the emergence of Saivism in the above form. However, we have also to take into consideration the other vital dimension of Saivite *bhakti* philosophy of this period in Karnataka,, i. e., the concept of *istalinga* (personal *linga*) and *jangama* (moving or roving devotees/ *Siva sarana*) which provided a base for staunch Saivism without a bar of caste, material position and gender in the context of devotion. The *jangamas* were critical about the worship of Siva in temples with *agama* rituals that called for the priority of brahmanical rituals in worship. In fact, *Pasupata* Saivism, from the beginning, had in its tradition, *jangamas* who renounced the social life of the family-holders, wandered about carrying *lingas* or symbols on their bodies (Sakhare 1978:215: Krishnarao 1955:14-19). *Pasupata* Saivism was a staunch devotional tradition, supposed to have originated in the regions around Gujarath.(Bhandarkar). It is recognised as the origin of the *kalamukhas* of this region who were responsible for the Saivite temple-culture in this region. Thus, *jangama* ideology was at the base of the Saivite temple institutions. For that matter, *bhakti* ideology in India generally held personal relationship with god without the bar of hierarchy as the foremost value. This ideology itself later created a space for the agamic temple institutions in the Medieval period.

The usual practice of scholars, in understanding Medieval Saivism, is to bifurcate the Saivas into two separate halves: one being a part of the larger brahmanical order advocating temples and all sorts of social discriminations, and the other revolting against this system. Nandi too preconceives this dichotomy and tries to locate this in an urban milieu, in which context the latter becomes an ideology of the new socio-economic milieu of the urban sections(1975). Such a stance simplifies the reality because, in



this region, we see different urban and rural classes emerging to the forefront of the society zealously adopting temple culture, a phenomenon which was the main cause of the unprecedented and overwhelming expansion of Saiva temple bases. We see a range of expression of *bhakti* and worship in which, on the one hand, there were saints like Allama Prabhu who even rejected the restriction of the concept of *linga* to any objective form, while on the other hand there were *Kalamukha* saints based in temples and brahmanical rituals, who worshipped Vishnu, Brahma, Surya, etc. as subordinates to Siva. One section of the *jangamas*, who advocated mysticism, developed a critique of the temple institution and brahminical rituals within the context of Saivism thus declaring caste, Vedic and *agamic* ritual, gender, etc. to be immaterial in the worship of Siva. We can not also overlook the fact that Saiva mysticism too had its source in the *agamic* brahmanical philosophy, if not ritual, and to that extent it was not a total rejection of brahminism. There was the other section of *jangamas*, like *Ekantada Rama*, who received land and village donations, worshipped other gods under Siva's hegemony, but advocated staunch Saivism.

The *agamas* propagated that one who builds temples not only attains heaven but also becomes god oneself (Kalaburgi 1987:44). The possibility of the practice of identifying with Siva personally or collectively could have emerged from such beliefs. In an inscription from Kotisvara temple at Kuppaturu, one of the most powerful temple bases of this area, strictures are passed against those who discriminate against the other castes (Rice: Sorab 268). The records from *Kodiya matha*, based at Kedaresvara temple in Balligave, describe how the people of all sections were given food and shelter in that place (Rice: Sk 102). The saints of this *matha* boast themselves of as *jangama kalpa bhujas* (*kalpa* tree for *jangamas*) (Rice: Sk 105). Thus, with all their power and brahmanical practices, these temples had a symbiotic relationship with the *jangamas* and their ideology. This complex situation is reflected in the *jangama* section of devotees also. These devotees show different degrees of reaction and lenience to the *agamic* mode

of worshipping in temples. Ekantada Rama and his team had believed in temple building as a mode of heralding Siva's supremacy over the rest of the gods. Thus, the preconceived notion that there is an ideological contradiction between the *Kalamukhas* and the *jangamas* can not be stretched too far.

### III

#### 1. The Saivite *mathas* –Expansion of their base

There are a few important studies on Saiva monasticism and the history of the *Kalamukhas* (Krishnarao 1955; Lorenzen David 1972; Vasundhara filliozat 2001 and Nandi). Among them, Nandi tries to situate the *mathas* in a socio-economic process and traces the sectarian confrontation between the Saivas and the Jainas to this. Saivas, organising themselves into *mathas* in the model of Jaina monastic organisation, established their supremacy over the Jainas. Whatever liberal elements one sees in the Saiva *mathas* was a strategy adopted to outwit the Jainas (1984:199). The rulers needed these *mathas* to wield command over the subject peasantry and craftsmen. The priestly class of the temples grew to be religious intermediaries joining hands with other feudal ruling classes which exploited the peasants and craftsmen such as weavers, oil millers, etc. ultimately leading to *Virasaiva* revolt (1975). The urbanisation in this part of Karnataka led to the formation of wealthy merchants among both the Saivas and the Jainas resulting into a conflict. Ultimately, *Virasaivas* won this battle because their ideology was focused on a changed historical reality. Nandi utilises a lot of later *Virasaiva* literature for his deductions. In the present section, the intention is to understand the expansion of Saiva *mathas* in this region and to bring out the complexity of the problem.

Out of 210 Saiva temples towards the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, 45 had a resident *acharya* who received gifts and managed the temple institution. This *acharya* was either the head of a main *matha* based at that temple or of an affiliated *matha*



located at a different temple. There were five major *mathas* at Balligave towards the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century and we see a gradual spread of Kalamukha centers in the surrounding agrarian settlements and emerging town centers in the subsequent period. Balligave retained its command over such *mathas*, because these new ones were mostly the branches of the main *mathas* of Balligave. There were two main lines of *Kalamukhas* at Balligave, one of which belonged to *Bhujangavali* and the other to *Parvatavali*. It is held that the latter originated at Srisaila while the former claim that they are the descendents of Kasmiradeva, whose provenance is not certain. The *matha* of the *Bhujangavali* line was based at Tripurantaka temple, which in 1077 had a command over ten other temples of the surrounding area within a radius of 20 Kms. An inscription records that those temples were subordinated to (*pratibaddha*) the Tripurantaka temple because all of them belonged to the *Bhujangavali* line (ECS VII&VIII:Sk.35). This custom of subordinating the temples continued till the 13<sup>th</sup> century as per a record at Kotisvara temple of Kuppaturu which mentions 9 temples within a radius of 25 Kms that were subordinated to it (Rice:Sb 275).

This type of branching out is well exemplified in the case of Kodiya *matha* based at Kedaresvara temple in Balligave. Kodiya *matha* of the *Parvatavali* line, with a modest beginning towards the close of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, emerged as the most powerful establishment of this region in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It attracted the rulers of the surrounding regions as well as the Chalukya, Kalachurya and Hoysala emperors, who one after the other rewarded it with gifts of nearly 22 villages. One of the saints of this line, named Vamasakti, who lived towards mid 12<sup>th</sup> century, was called *rajaguru*. It was during his time the temple was rebuilt as one of the most beautiful architectural complexes in this region. The saints of this *matha* even had similarities with the *Pasupatas* of Somnath in Gujarat (Lorenzen, 1972:108.)

Along with its prosperity in Balligave, the Kodiya *matha* expanded its base up to places as distant as Gadag located at a distance of more than 150 Kms. from this place (Lorenzen, 1972:

99-100). In 1104, Brahmagavunda of Abbaluru built a temple for god Brahmesvara and got it consecrated in the presence of Somesvarapandita of Kodiya *matha* who received donations (Fleet:25A). The disciples of that saint seem to have established a branch of Kodiyamatha at Abbaluru. At the same time Kodiyamatha was the custodian of Nagaresvara temple situated at the premises of Kedaresvara temple (Rice:Sk 94,1094 A.D.). By the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century this *matha* had its branches at Bandalike(Somanatha temple), Gadag(Trikutesvara), Hanugal (Cikkesvara) (Suppl.to E.C.:Sk370), and Nidunegilu (Mallikarjuna) (Annigeri:Hk 13). Kodiya *matha* had a centralised control over the resources of all these *mathas*. A couple of records at Balligave refer to gifts of land made to the subordinate temples. An inscription from Bandalike informs that *acharyas* of some of these temples, under the leadership of Jnanasakti of Kodiya *matha* donated land to *herggades* of the *mathas* of both the places (ECS:370).

Kodiyamatha represents two different angles of expansion of the bases of the Saiva *mathas*. The first one was through initiating a new temple out of its own resources in distant places. The second and most popular way was through incorporating the temples built by different sections of people. As per the records, the builders themselves invited the saints and attached their temples to Kodiya *matha*. In 1139, two sculptors from Balligave built a temple for their god Kusuvesvara to get rid of the sins of *silpikula* and handed it over to Vamasakti of Kodiya *matha* (Rice:Sk 112). Through such an act, the builders not only made arrangements for the management of their temple but also ensured the performance of *agamic* rituals for their god.

The *mathas* proliferated in the surrounding regions towards the close of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. We see a few more *mathas* in places like Chikkakereyuru(Rice:Sb 328), Bammakuru (Rice:Sk236,242), Hiriyaakereyuru(Rice:Sb346), Mayitammana Muchand (Rice:Sk 276,277) and Hanche (Rice:Sb 586) which were also expanding their bases to other villages. However, most of these *mathas* and several *acharyas* in other temples were not assigned to any traditional lines of the *Kalamukhas*. Many of them were not even



recognised as *Kalamukhas*. The *agamas* and epigraphs also inform that there were both pasupata and kalamukha saints who were particularly initiated as *vрати* or *mahavrati* which was a life of austerity. There were also kapalikas, jamgamas, dhvajins, karankins, etc. who exemplified different stages of *mahavrata* (Vasundhara Filliozat:2001, 5-26). Thus what is usually considered to be characteristic of *Virasaivas* was nothing but an integral part of traditional Saivism. This shows the inner complexity of the Saivite saintly and priestly tradition in this region which was broadly projected through the *Kalamukhas* who were at its apex. The *Kalamukhas*, were of the highest order among the different varieties of Saiva saints to emerge and spread as the temple pontiffs in the 11<sup>th</sup> century from Balligave, while towards the close of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, this system began to develop diversity most probably due to the emergence of multiple saintly traditions of uncertain origins and affiliations which catered to the needs of diverse communities by adopting this system.

## 2. The Saiva *mathas* and other devotional cults like Vaisnavism

The Saiva *mathas* had successfully brought Vaisnavite and the goddess cults of this area under their umbrella through theological interpretations as well as organisational support. One interesting feature of Vaisnava shrines was that all of them formed a part of *agraharas* or *brahmapuris*. It seems that a section of brahmanas in *agraharas* worshipped these deities. There seem to have existed popular folk cults of Narasimha and Vithala which were not institutionalised due to the absence of Vaisnava *mathas* in this locality. Probably, Saivism could establish its peaceful domination over Vaisnavism because of two reasons: 1) The *agraharas* which were Vaisnavite shrine shelters were prominently Saiva centers and the Saiva *mathas* had also accepted the brahmanical parameters. (This point will be dealt with in a later section.) 2) The Saiva *mathas* adopted the worship of Visnu as a part of their theology and temple rituals. The *Pasupata* tradition, to which the *Kalamukhas* trace their origin, too worshipped Siva

and Visnu together.

The *Kalamukhas* brought Vishnu and several other gods under the supremacy of Siva in their pantheon, while they also worshipped Visnu and Brahma in separate shrines built for them in *trikuta* (three shrines) temples. This form of worship of the trinity seems to be quite an early popular practice of Karnataka Saivism. Such Saivas were called *misra Saivas*. The three deities in a temple were called *Traipurusha Deva* (Krishnan 1964) (three male deities). This was obviously an attempt at synthesising any three dominant cults of that time. Temples with multiple shrines were commonly built in Medieval Karnataka to accommodate godheads of different cults (Setter 1978). The *Kalamukhas* were particular about the trinity of Brahma, Visnu and Siva and we see several *trikuta* temples of this period in this region that indicate the popularity of this practice. On the lintels of *antarala* (chamber attached to the sanctum) of these temples are regularly shown the figure of Nataraja at the center prominently flanked by Brahma and Visnu. The Kodiya *matha* belonged to the saints of *muvarakone santati*, a term which literally means 'descendents of the three chambers (of gods).' Most probably, this line got its name due to the *trikuta* temple called Kedaresvara at Balligave which was its original place. The Vaisnava deity in most of these places was Kesava. *Muvara kone* family carried its three gods to wherever it expanded its bases. Though Visnu was consecrated in a subsidiary chamber of the Saiva temple, the Vaisnavas seem to have treated it as their own temple, and most probably they were encouraged to offer worship and gifts to their gods. In 1159, a temple for Virakesava was built at Balligave by one Kesava *dandanayaka*, and a land grant was jointly made for that temple as well as the *trikuta temple* of Bandalike, probably to the Visnu shrine in that temple. Vamasakti, the pontiff of Kodiya *matha*, received this grant (Rice:Sk 123). Vamasakti is also described as the *aradhya* of Kesava *dandanayaka* which shows that the Saiva *acharyas* commanded the respect of Vaisnava devotees due to *trikuta* worship. Thus, Saiva *mathas* had emerged as the confident guardians of the grants made by the Vaisnavas.



### 3. Saiva mathas and *agraharas*

Nandi makes a distinction between *smarta* brahmins and *agamic* brahmins (1984:190-92 ;1975:39-41). The *smartas* who were the advocates of the Vedic tradition had a strong opposition to idol worship and temples rituals. Therefore, they condemn *agamic* brahmins who had emerged as religious intermediaries in the feudal power structure. Therefore, the *smarta* brahmin took the leadership of the *Veerasaiva* movement under a changed mode of production and opposed the temple-centric brahmin intermediaries of the feudal state. This argument is entirely based rather dubious literary sources datable to a slightly later period and seems to be a gross simplification of reality. The following facts would reveal the complexity of the problem.

The *Kalamukhas* originally do not seem to have had a high status according to the brahmanical standards as reflected in Medieval literature (Sakhare 1978:215-220). However, by the 11<sup>th</sup> century many of the *Kalamukha* lines of this region were thoroughly brahmanised and they commanded respect of the brahmins of *agraharas*. Perhaps, they emerged as a Saiva priestly class, often called *aradhyas*. They seem to have imbibed brahmanical practices, but there is no clear indication that they were equated with the brahmanas of the *agraharas*. This ambiguity leads to debates whether *Kalamukhas* were brahmanas or not (Krishnarao 1955:113-132). Such a debate arises out of the epigraphic references which praise many of them as being well-versed in *Vedas*, *puranas*, *sastras* and other Sanskrit lore. They established schools in their temples which were nothing but replicas of *agrahara* schools. Since *agraharas* had also adopted temple rituals and had played a major role in evolving *agamic* brahminism, these temple priests who were well-versed in *Vedas* and *agamic* rituals seem to have been revered by *agraharas* also. There are evidences to show that the *Kalamukha acharyas* commanded the respect of the *agrahara* inmates. Talagunda, described as *anadi* ( the origin untraceable) *agrahara* had a Siva temple datable to the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. During the 12<sup>th</sup> century, there were four to five temples here, one of which had a Saivite *acharya* also (MAR, 1927: no.60). This is the general case with all

the *agraharas* in this region, and the brahmin leaders of the *Virasaivas* like Basavanna and Ekantada Rama are said to have hailed from similar temple-based brahmana settlements of the other regions. Otherwise, we can not account for Ekantada Rama's staunch faith in temple-centric worship. The *agrahara* of Kuppagadde invited Vamasakti of Kodiyamatha to officiate the installation of god Ramesvara built by one of the brahmins who seems to be a state official and a member of that *agrahara* (Rice:Sb 179).

Temple institutions and *agraharas* existed on mutual dependence. There are indications to suggest that the *Kalamukhas* had even recruited the members of *agraharas* as their successors and as teachers in their schools (Chidanandamurthy, 1966:129-145) which taught *Vedic* and other Sanskrit lore, and the *agrahara* members also seem to have taken up their education in such schools. An epigraph of 1157 at the Pranavesvara temple of Talagunda lays down detailed prescriptions of *agamic* mantras, and the rituals that are the part of them to be offered to the god (Rice:Sk 185). It is also revealing that the brahmanas of the 11<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> century found temples to be the main source of donations and employment, as we see no exclusive *agrahara* grants of this period in this area. Whatever grants we find are in the temple records. Thus, *brahmapuris* which were centered around temples, flourished in this area indicating that temples were the means of expansion of the brahmanical bases during this time. To cite an instance, in 1207, a grant of *vrittis* was made to brahmins including to the grandson of Ekantada Rama on the occasion of a temple construction (Rice:Sk 235). Ekantada Rama himself hailed from a *Brahmapuri* called Somanathapura. Thus, the perception of *smarta* and *agamic* traditions as two opposite social formations proves to be inadequate in understanding both Medieval brahminism and Saivism.

#### 4. The Abbalur incident

Towards the mid twelfth century there were certain developments in Saivism which had far reaching consequences for the development of this tradition. It was expressed in the form



of a staunch devotion to Siva, and the *Jangama* elements are predominant in it. *Veerasaiva* tradition, which takes a final form in the late medieval period, inherits this tradition. Thus these twelfth century developments are usually recognised as the original form of that tradition. The original phase of *Veerasaivism*, as we believe, had two distinct trends reflected in two different kinds of evidence: in *vacana* literature we see a reaction of mystic devotees to temple-centric Siva worship as well as the ignorant devotional practices of the folk, especially of the lower sections of society. The epigraphs and archaeological remains of temples of that period have left the traces of a militant Saivism targeting the Jainas as their rivals. Modern scholars have taken great pains in understanding these two distinct expressions of staunch Saivism. One major argument is that militant Saivism was a *Kalamukha* element and the mystic Saivas were the original *Veerasaivas* (Setter 2001). This view obviously tries to project original *Virasaivism* basically as a social reform movement, and militant Saivism as an external element. Thus evacuating the militants from the original *Virasaivas*, the Saiva-Jaina conflict is perceived as a sectarian conflict between the *Kalamukhas* and the Jainas. This is, however, a modern perception because the Medieval *Virasaiva* writers accounted for both the kinds of Saivas with pride in their sixty three *puratanas* (forefathers) without creating any bifurcation among them (It is witnessed in Harihara's works who was the first compiler of these *puranas* in the 14<sup>th</sup> cent.). The Jaina sources also cherished this memory with a bitterness against the *Virasaivas* or *Lingayatas* (Sannayya.2000).

Nandi objects to the explanation of this conflict as a sectarian rivalry of philosophical nature, and considers such explanations as naïve proposals (1975:34). He, on the other hand perceives it as a conflict between the Saiva and Jaina trading communities which were emerging prosperous in a world of competition, with the Saiva-Jaina conflict being an ideological extension of those basic economic conflicts. He also considers Ekantada Rama as one of the *Kalamukhas* who was later converted to *Virasaivism* (1984:199-200). There was a temple related competition between the *Kalamukha* Saivas and Jainas for a greater share in political



patronage and social support in the feudal set up (1984:192). By so perceiving, Nandi also treats the militant Saivas as originally different from the Veerasaivas, merging only later into one. Construction of *Veerasaivism* as a pure radical and reform movement generates all the above arguments.

The above problem does not come under the purview of the present article, though, it is certainly related to this topic. The original expressions of staunch Saivism in both its forms was a pan-Karnataka event with its hub outside the region we are here concerned with. However, the activity of militant Saivism and its consequences have left their trace in this region also. Abbaluru was the most remembered place in the *Veerasaiva* tradition due to the miracle of Ekanatada Rama, one of the most revered saints of this tradition. The oldest reference to the miracle is recorded in an undated inscription (Fleet:237ff) probably of the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, in the Somanatha temple of Abbaluru which was originally a Jaina temple. Rama belonged to Somanathapura, a *brahmapuri* in the town called Alande in North Karnataka. He came to Abbaluru and took shelter in the Brahmesvara temple where a branch of the Kodiya *matha* was located. He was believed to be the incarnation of Veerabhadra born for the purpose of vanquishing *nastikas* (non-believers in *paramatma*), and to have come to Abbaluru to fulfil this mission. Accordingly, he picked quarrel with the Jainas and won the battle through his miracle of chopping of his own head only to rejoin it. The stake was a Jina temple at Abbaluru which was, with great violence, converted into a Veera Somanatha temple, Rama's god in Alande, and rebuilt as a *trikuta*. Subsequently, Bijjala, Chalukya Somesvara, and a local ruler together granted three villages to this temple. The gift was made after Rama was taken with honour to their palaces or camps where Rama was worshipped and the gifts given were registered. The Veera Somanatha temple stands witness to this event with several sculptures representing events of conversion. Interestingly, there are sculptures depicting many other saints of the later *Veerasaiva* tradition. This event, if we are to believe the undated epigraph of Abbaluru, took place around the mid twelfth century



exactly when the mystic Saivas had gathered at Kalyana, the capital of Kalachuris.

The conflict between the Saivas and the Jainas could not have arisen out of a competition for patronage and material resources at least in Abbaluru which is situated in the region under consideration. Towards mid twelfth century, Jaina temples were in no way a match to the Saiva temples in their material resources, popularity, command and political importance. Out of the 77 villages donated to the temples of this area, six belonged to the Jainas. This is also the ratio of other gift items, like agrarian and garden lands, taxes and materials. The leading Saiva temples were frequented by the major emperors who held sway over this region, while the Jaina temples did not have that privilege. There were three major Saiva *mathas* in the region that were predominant. Saivas had many temples built on a grand scale with artistic excellence through the use of huge resources while the Jainas neither before nor after the mid twelfth century possessed none equal to them. Thus, the Saivas need not have trampled upon the Jainas out of fear or insecurity. On the contrary, their material power itself appears to have enabled the Saivas to pounce upon the Jainas.

Jainas appear meek and insecure. But there are no instances of them physically attacking Saiva temples as a course of remedy. This was partially because the Jaina temples of this region owed their existence to the eclectic patrons of mainly the ruling classes who were personally the devotees of Siva. Some of the prominent patrons of the Jainas from the local rung of the ruling classes, took the support of their Saiva overlords to provide donations to the temples they built. We have no hint of an economic rivalry separating the devotees of these two parties. However, there was certainly a rivalry between these two groups as reflected in the epigraphic records as well as in works like *Samaya Parikshe* composed by Brahmasiva in the early part of the twelfth century (Kulakarni 1958). This rivalry was mainly the concern of the class which was conscious of and survived on the temple rituals and the respective traditions. Brahmasiva wrote his book particularly to defend the case of the Jainas against the other sects, mainly the Saivas. For his arguments, he chooses to condemn the rival sects

and their unholy popular practices. He educates the readers about the well-known worshipping centers of the rival sects as originally belonging to the Jaina deities. He also expresses his concern about the non-Jaina cult practices of the Jaina followers. Other, slightly earlier, Jaina works did not have the mission of *Samayaparikshe* though they boast of the superiority of the Jaina brahmanas over the other brahmanas (Puttappa 1977:48). Thus, towards the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Jaina brahmanas and monks had begun to acutely sense their weakness as against the prospering non-Jaina communities and their temple centers. Accounting for the reasons for such unsecured feelings of the Jainas may not be feasible to this micro-regional study. However, from whatever we have grasped from our material in the earlier sections we have noticed that Saivism had emerged as a predominant tradition due to its practical flexibility which was unavailable in the case of Jainism.

With regarding to the Rama's faith, we notice that he hailed from a *brahmapuri* which was usually a temple-centered settlement. It is clear in the records that Saivas believed him to be a *gana* of Siva just like the other early *Veerasaiva* figures who had come to earth to subdue (*niyamisu*) the other *samayas*. There is no indication that Rama ever underwent an initiation to the *Kalamukha* order. Veerabhadra, the god that emerges popular in *Veerasaivism*, was believed to be the creator of Rama. He is also described as a *Sivayogi* who wandered from place to place on pilgrimage as a *jangama*. He took it as a part of his holy activity to visit temples, and to worship Siva in such places. Therefore, temple-based worship was not only a part of *jangamahood*, the temples were, in general, main shelters for wandering devotees. These temples, where *jamgamas* took shelter, were mostly managed by the *Kalamukhas* who could not have afforded to wander like the *jangamas*. Rama takes shelter in Abbaluru Brahmesvara *sthana*. It is obvious that Rama appears to be a Saiva brahmana opting to be a *jamgama*, since this way of life was open to all the sections of Saiva family-holders. *Kalamukhas* provided the material support for the *jamgama* tradition that flourished as and when the Saiva temples and *mathas* prospered. Rama, too, did not find it



odd to build a temple himself, and to receive donations. For donations, he was invited to the royal courts where the gifts were made. The *Kalamukhas*, on the other hand, received donations in their own *mathas* to which the donors arrived personally. This also confirms that Rama claimed to be a *jangama* who had to be revered through *dasoha*, *dasoha* being one of the basic concepts in *Veersaivism*. Thus, the epigraphic evidences corroborate the Medieval literary tradition. It is also revealing that Rama adopted *agama* prescriptions in building the temple and worshipping Siva and for that, perhaps, he had to settle at the temple as a *sthanapati*. Ramadeva Bhatta, the grandson of Ekantada Rama, is cited in an epigraph at Bandalike as one of the recipients of *agrahara vrittis* alongwith other brahmanas, about 70 years after the Abbalur incident. Thus, the term *jangama* in the Saiva tradition, can not be said to simply indicate a strict renunciation of a wanderer who rejected the temple rituals altogether.

The foregoing review brings us to the conclusion that the *Kalamukha* temples, mystic and militant Saivism were the three contextual expressions of Saivism, the latter two belonging to *jangama* tradition legacies of which the later *Veerasaiva* tradition are well remembered. The militant Saivas also adopted *agamic* methods for the worship of their *istalinga*, while the mystic Saivas rejected both the *agama* rituals as well as the brahmanical sanskrit lore connected with it, and preferred personal worship of the *istalinga*. However, the latter derived their mystic philosophy from the relevant Sanskrit *agamic* sources also though they stand distinctly for their creative expression in Kannada idioms called *vacanas*. The Kannada *vacana* expression was also common to the militant Saivas, though the *Kalamukhas* never seem to have written in Kannada.

## 5. The aftermath of Abbalur

Before closing the present investigation, it is worthwhile examining what happened to the Jainas of this region after the Abbalur incident. Did this incident eradicate Jainism from this region? We get recorded evidence of the construction of six Jaina temples in different village and town settlements during the later



half of the twelfth century. All these temples were the bases of the main Jaina *samgha* located at Santinatha temple at Bandalike. In 1204, this temple received a gift of three villages from Veerballala II, the Hoysala ruler (Rice:Sk 225). The donation was mediated by one *mahapradhana* Mallisetti of Kammata, probably a Jaina, who also persuaded Ballala for the donation of a village to the Hariharesvara temple at Satenahalli. The *savantas*, of the Kadamba rulers of Bandalike, namely Sankara and his son Mudda, got two temples built at Chikkamagadi (Rice:Sk 197, 1182)) and Kodkani (Rice:Sb 587 1208) respectively. There were two more temples built at Tevarateppa (Rice:Sb 345) and Sorab (Rice:Sb28). Two of the temples are interesting cases, because in Chikkamagadi, a donation was registered in 1182, by a Saiva saint called Suryabharana Pandita of Tripurantaka temple at Balligave (Rice:Sk 197). This Saiva saint gifted half a *mattar* land and an areca garden with 500 trees to god Parsvanatha because the latter was a great devotee of Siva. The Sorab temple of Santinatha datable to 1208, received a *yogapattike* from a Saiva saint called Srikantha with an assurance that Siva's devotees would also look after that temple as long as the *yogapattike* was worshipped there (Rice:Sb 28). There are a couple of instances in which Saivas do not find any presence. All these instances show that the Abbalur incident did not have any noteworthy negative effect on the spread of Jainism in this place, though this was at the cost of the supremacy of their gods. The *Kalamukhas* extended their generosity towards their temples once the supremacy of Siva was accepted by the Jaina monks and and brahmanas. These developments might have resulted in an easy absorption of Jaina *Sravakas* (or family-holders) of different castes into the Saiva fold.

The above developments, towards the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century, indicate that Saivas had established their predominance over all the existing cults including the Jainas in this area. This dominance was not expressed through a physical occupation of the Jaina temples in the way in which things happened at either Abbalur or at few other places. Even now we see dilapidated Jaina temples with their inscriptions above mentioned bearing no hint of the Saiva occupation.



However, we also come across a few other Jaina temples which were converted into shrines for the non-Jaina gods of the late medieval period. There is every likelihood that these temples were only occupied after they were deserted by the Jainas. This indicates that there was a large scale decline in the Jaina population of this region around the 14<sup>th</sup> century caused either by migrations or by the absorption of the Jainas into Saivism. The picture after mid thirteenth century turns hazy because there was an abrupt end to the activity of temple patronage during that period, as a result of which there is stoppage of recorded evidence regarding the activities of these cults in this area in particular and this part of Karnataka in general. Big and small temples, Saiva and Jaina alike, without distinction, became irrelevant to the patrons. What is, however, puzzling is why there was an abrupt end to this whole process shortly after a period of so much contention for supremacy among these-centered cults.

The wild guess by some of the scholars who have woven a story of Muslim invasion (Krishnarao, 1955:34-35), does not hold good because a general decline of temple patronage had already set in half a century prior to the first ever Muslim invasion in to the Deccan. Another reason similarly proposed is the emergence of *Virasaivism* which rendered temples irrelevant for the attainment *moksha*. However, we have no indication that all these temples were deserted immediately after the mid thirteenth century, though they did not receive any fresh gifts thereafter. There is every likelihood that many of these temples continued to be centers of worship in the later period for the *Veerasaivas* also. We can not other wise account for the survival of these temples to this day. What is, however, clear is that there were certain developments within the patron-classes which brought temple-expansion, that had been taking place rigorously for more than two centuries, to an end towards the mid thirteenth century.

### **Resume:**

The foregoing review makes it clear that the materialistic explanations proposed by Nandi are inadequate in understanding

the dynamics of Medieval Saivism. To bring the foregoing arguments to a focus, the following assertions could be made: 1) The *smarta* and *agama* brahminism of the medieval period can not be taken as ideologies belonging to two distinct material conditions. So is the case with the *jangamas* and the *Kalamukhas*. 2) Temples need not necessarily be construed as feudal institutions which turned oppressive and irrelevant in a changed material condition. On the contrary, in the region under consideration, the temple institutions received an unprecedented patronage in a changed material condition, namely, urbanisation. 3) The view that the Saiva-Jaina conflict was but an extension of a conflict of the material interests does not stand scrutiny. 4) Viewing brahminism and *bhakti* (as it is perceived) as no more than an ideology of the oppressive classes aimed at manipulating the lower classes is a simplification which needs to be re-considered while understanding the devotional cults properly.

The dynamics of Saivism, or of the devotional cults in general, of the Medieval period belie the perceptions and deductions that had so far been made. The present micro regional study does help us in locating the problem, though several such studies are required to come out with better economic and socio-cultural explanations.

## NOTES

1. Annigeri A.M. (Ed) *Karnataka Inscroptions*, IV, (K.I.) Dahrwar, 1961.
2. Bhandarkar R.G., *Saivism & Vaisnavisa and other minor Religious Systems* Poona, 1982.
3. Chidanandamurthy M., *Kannada Sasanagala Samskritika Adhyayana*, Bangalore, 1966:125-135.
4. Delury G.A., *The Cult of Vithoba*, Deccan College, Pune, 1994:35.
5. Filliozat Vasundhara, *Kalamukha and Pasupata Temples in harwar*, The Kuppuswamy Sastri Research Institute, Chennai 001.
6. Fleet J.F. "Inscriptions at Ablur" *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol.V, 25 A, P.213-65.



7. Gopal B.R. (Ed.) *Karnataka Inscriptions*, Vol IV, Dharwad, 1973.
8. Kalaburgi M.M., *Dharrawada Jilla Shasana Suchi*, Dharwad.
9. Kalaburgi M.M. *Maharastrada Kannada Sasanagalu*, Bombay, 1987.
10. Krishnan K.G. "Traipurusha-TrikUta Cults in Karnataka," *Quarterly Journal of Mythic Society*, 45, April 1964: 53-55.
11. Krishnarao Kapataral, *Karnatakada Lakula Saivara Itihaasa*, KRI, Dharwar, 1955:14-19.
12. Kulakarni B.S. (ed) *Samaya Parikshe*, Karnataka University, Dharwar, 1958.
13. Lorenzen David, *The Kapalikas and Kalamukhas: Two Lost Saivite Sects*, New Delhi, 1972.
14. Murthy M.L.K. and Sontheimer Gunther D., "Prehistoric Background to Pastoralism in the Southern Deccan in the Light of Oral Traditions and Cults of some Pastoral Communities" *Anthropos*, 75, 1980:164-184.
15. Nandi R.N. "Origin of the Virasaiva Movement" *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol.2, No.1, 1975:32-36.
16. Nandi R.N. "Origin and Nature of Saivite Monasticism: The Case of Kalamukhas" in R.S. Sharma(ed.) *Indian Society: Historical Probing*s, New Delhi, 1984:190-202.
17. Nandi R.N. *Social Roots of Religion in Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1986. *Mysore Archaeological Reports*, 1927.
18. Narayanan M.G.S. and Veluthat Keshavan, "Bhakti Movement in South India" in D.N.Jha (Ed.) *Feudal Social Formations in Early India*, Delhi:1987 348-75
19. Prasad Om Prakash, "Towns in Early Medieval Karnataka" in Vijay Kumar Thakur (Ed.) *Towns in Pre-Modern India*, New Delhi, 1992:169-72.
20. Prasad Om Prakash, "A Study of Towns in Karnataka on the Basis of Epigraphical Sources A.D. 600-1200" *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, 1977.
21. Puttappa K.V.(ed) *Vikramarjuna Vijayam* by Pampa, Mysore, 1977:22.
22. Rice B.Lewis (Ed), *Epigraphia Carnatika*, (E.C.) Vol. VII, 1902, VIII.
23. Sakhare M.R., *History and Philosophy of Lingayat Religion*, Karnatak University, Dharwar, 1978: 215.
24. Sannayya(ed.and tr.) *Rajavali Kathasara* by Devachandra, Mysore, 2000.
25. Setter S., "Typology of Hoysala Temple Architecture"

A.V.Narasimhamurthy (Ed.), *Archaeology in Karnataka*, Mysore, 1978:279-303.

26. Setter S. "Balligave: A Medieval Urban Mosaic of Multi-Religious Communities" in Setter S. and Kaimal (Ed.) *We Live Together*, ICHR, Delhi, 1999:54-84.

27. Veluthat Kesavan, "The Temple Base of Bhakti Movement in South India" in K.M. Srimali (Ed.) *Essays in Indian Art Religion and Society*, Delhi, 1987:151-60.

### ABBREVIATIONS

ECS= *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Supplement to Vol VII and VIII, Mysore

MAR= Mysore Archaeological Reports.



## **Unheard Voices: Narratives by Dalit Women**

**Shylaja Venugopal\***

This village-within-a-village is the colony of the Scheduled Castes, in other words, the Harijans. For all theoretical purposes they are within the village while in practice it they are outside as outcastes. Within this “village outside” there are voices very often unheard of, opinions that are unregistered and plights, which go unnoticed. Those are the voices of the marginalized among the marginalized, the Dalit women.

There are innumerable ways to intervene into this system. Listening to narratives by these dalit women is one of the various ways to understand the deprivation, oppression and exploitation consisting this system can be understood. It throws light on aspects hitherto not taken stock of by the major social movements like Dalit and women’s movements. The purpose of presenting these narratives is not merely to highlight the poverty and the marginalization they suffer, by being at the lowest rung of the social ladder. Instead these narratives do high light how and why government policies fail to the reach the groups for whom they have been designed. The insensitive and corrupt attitude of the bureaucracy towards the people of the lower castes and women are well-known. Because a dalit woman is both a dalit and a woman, she certainly faces greater humiliation than a dalit male. Their narratives testify to this.

---

\* Lecturer in English, Government First Grade College, Kuvempunagar, Mysore, Karnataka

Very often, there are references to the liberal spaces enjoyed by Dalit women as compared to other women. But, usually, such statements are not properly qualified. Their scope and limitations are not marked out. Mere sweeping and general statements are made. Consequently, it is usually thought; that patriarchy does not prevail in the Dalit way of life. Even the Dalit movement and prominent Dalit leaders very often claim that they have a very liberal and democratic set-up. These narratives spell out clearly where Dalit women enjoy liberal spaces and where they do not, and the extent to which the patriarchal domestic set up is prevalent in their life-world.

The Dalit and Women's movements are of particular importance to Dalit women. The former tries to interrogate the oppressive and exploitative caste system, while the latter tries to interrogate the same through gender. But both these movements do not do justice to Dalit women. Their suffering is due to the complex fact that they are both dalits as well as women. Both caste and gender converge in the suffering.

Gender oppression is directly related to the question of patriarchy. But within the Dalit movement, gender and the question of patriarchy are not addressed. While the Dalit movement raises its voice against the exploitative system outside, both within the movement as well as their homes patriarchal gender constructions strongly persist. At the other end, patriarchy is the central question in women's movements of all hues and forms (except among the rightists). But they are caste-blind. This blindness prevents them from taking stock of certain forms of oppressions, which are experienced by women because they belong to certain castes. It is very significant that certain forms of economic oppression arise because of the caste factor. Thus certain categories of jobs are denied to them. Economic and caste status are very often directly related. Thus, the gender-blindness of one movement and the caste-blindness of the other keep the Dalit women in a highly disadvantageous position. These narratives throw light on these limitations of the Dalit and women's movements which claim to represent the interests of dalits and women. These narratives also highlight the self image of Dalit women.



Hosale is like any other Indian village, remote and secluded devoid of cleanly laid roads, neatly made pavements and well-dressed people. It is in the plains, commonly called here *Bayalu seeme*. It comes under the Malavalli town jurisdiction. The village is totally at the mercy of the rain god. Except for the pumps in the fields belonging to a few wealthy persons, no other facility for irrigation is available in this village. We went to the village during the month of April. The whole area was very dry with little signs of vegetation. Weather too was very hot. The heat and the dust remind one of Eliot's famous lines, "April is the cruellest month."

In the evening, my friend, a native of that village, took me out for a walk as well as for talk. Women's voices were heard in bits and fragments. Most of those women there, with an exception of four, five families work as agricultural labourers.<sup>1</sup> Many of them do own half or one acres lands. Majority of the families are headed by women. In some families, husbands are dead, in some disabled, and in some others they are either irresponsible or very sick. In some of the families, the husbands are very much present in the village and they earn, but whatever they earn is spent on liquor which in turn makes the maintenance of the family the burden of the women. In some of the families there are, of course, sons, but in a majority of cases either they live separately or have migrated either to distant villages or to urban areas in search of livelihood. Their income is so meagre that their families do not benefit much from them and the responsibility of the mother continues unchanged. Majority of Dalit families are nuclear families. Joint families are rarely to be found.

One of the women narrated their tale of woe:

Every day we go out to work in the fields. These are dry lands and hence it is impossible to get work during summer. Even in the fields with pumps, it is impossible to get work everyday. Work is available for a day or two in a week. Owing to cuts in power supply, full-fledged cultivation is not possible even in fields with pumps. Sometimes we go to far off villages to work in the fields. We set off very early in the morning and

come back very late in the evening. We light the stove only in the evening, cook something and eat. By the time we go to bed every inch of our body will be aches. There are very difficult times. We carefully save a part of the grain given to us after harvests. Sometimes we request those who are well-to-do to give us something so that we do not starve. It is just staying alive. But even at the so-called affluent times, we can afford to eat only *Raagi* balls and salt curry (*Uppesaru*) or else *Raagi* balls with green chillies. Usually the curry is prepared only with horse -gram because cost-wise that is the cheapest. It costs just four rupees a kilogram. We eat other grams too but we cannot afford to buy them. We rarely eat vegetables. We use them only during the festivals. The same is true of milk and curds. We do not have the habit of drinking coffee or tea. During summer, we get some diluted buttermilk from the people who churn buttermilk to prepare butter. We usually get 30 rupees a day, out of which we spend Rs 4 for *Raagi* flour, 12 rupees for rice, chillies and certain other basic ingredients. When we go to far off villages in search of work, we have to adjust money even for the bus journey. And little money is left to buy anything else. We hardly use 100 grams of oil per month. We do not just use coconut, not because we don't like it but because we are unable to buy it.

The day for these Dalit women begins early in the morning at around 05.30. They work in the fields of others within the village till evening and come back dead tired to prepare the day's meal and to go to bed. Meanwhile, they have to work in their own fields too. They are incapable of hiring any labour. They do all the work. They shared their experiences with us:

We take so much trouble to grow a little *Raagi* (a variety of millet) in our fields. We borrow so much to buy the fertilizers, which have become costlier these days. Then we have to struggle so hard to repay the



debt. We have never been provided any loan from the bank. Our village doesn't have a bank. It is the rich people of our own village who give us money when we have problems. Politicians from our caste, who have been elected from our constituency have never helped us in anyway. If we go to meet them in the city they scold us very badly and turn us away even without offering a cup of coffee. One of our own men was an education minister. In spite of repeated requests, he did not sanction a high school to our village. Through him we tried to legalize the piece of land we are cultivating, but in vain.

The Karnataka Government provided bore wells to the lands of the Dalits under a scheme called *Ganga Kalyana Yojana*. They have to buy motor and pump to lift water. Most of these Dalit women do not possess any documents of ownership connected to the land they own and cultivate. In addition, they are illiterate and ignorant. They have no asset against which they can get loans from the bank. In addition, the very process of lending is so elaborate that they dare not approach the bank. They said that now in their own land they have wells and also water. Still, they are unable to use it because they cannot buy the pumps and the pipes to lift water. For the pump to work, they need electric connection. They have to pay for the poles, wires and also unofficially to the power line worker too, which they said they cannot afford. A question whether this isn't the plight of a Dalit man too is sure to surface. Undoubtedly, a Dalit male too experiences these hardships, but it makes a difference in the case of the Dalit families which are women-headed. The bureaucratic set-up as a whole, in this country, is not women friendly and more so in the case of Dalit women who are usually liable to be easily ill-treated. Secondly, the set-up is so thoroughly corrupt that no work is done in a matter of a few days. In most of the women-headed households, everyday the woman has to go out and make the ends meet. Such being the case, it is very difficult for her to leave the village and go to the concerned office for days together to get the work done. For her, every day away from the

village means starvation for the family members while in case of a married couple, if the husband goes out there is always the guarantee that at least the woman will fend for the family.

Owing to the rampant corruption that has crept into the marketing that system, these Dalit women find it extremely difficult to market what they have grown. They pointed out,

In our families we have to look after everything. There are no male members to look after the commercial transactions.<sup>2</sup> It is difficult for us to take what we have grown to the city and market them. We are always scared that we would be deceived. Still, we cannot escape deception. The middlemen come to the fields during harvest and the thrashing season. The buyers measure the grain in their *Seer* (a local measuring unit). Their *Seer*, in fact, measures more than the regular *Seer* we use. Therefore, naturally, we lose many measures of grain when it is measured thus. We know that. But we are helpless poor women. Don't speak of profit, what we get is not even enough to repay the debts. Isn't it for this that so many women commit suicide? It is highly difficult to manage.

Food security is their greatest problem. In addition, usually, the villagers have to pay higher prices for the provisions and other things when they buy it in the village. In fact, the same goods are available at cheaper prices in the city. These women, because of their inability to go to the city and make bulk purchases, have no other go but to pay higher prices in the village. This, again, is a drain on their meagre resources. This affects them more because their standard of living is very low when compared to the others.

They suffer from such high degrees of malnutrition that most of them have prematurely grown old. Their skin is extremely dry and wrinkled. A forty-year-old woman looks like a woman of sixty. They look very emaciated.

They say that the economic condition of the Dalits in the irrigated areas is comparatively better. One of the speakers had migrated from wet land area. Even though it is economically



better there, she doesn't prefer to go there. She feels,

In the irrigated areas, economically, the life for us Dalits, is relatively better; but other forms of oppression are greater. Our lives are more insecure. Violence by the landlords and upper castes is greater in those areas. In this area, caste oppression is much less. But, even in the dry-land areas, we are not let into the upper caste households as maidservants. At most we can enter their courtyards, that is all. We cannot even step into their verandahs.<sup>3</sup>

Caste hierarchy has become an integral part of their existence. There is no interaction between the two Dalit subgroups – *Holeyas* and *Madigas*. For all these years they have been living apart. On being questioned, a *Holeyas* woman said “it is a tradition created by god.” Even today, there isn't any inter-dining or inter-marriage between them.

Poverty prevails among both the *Holeyas* and the *Madigas*. Comparatively, *Madigas* seem to be in a very bad shape with the poverty index running higher. Their lack of nutrition is etched on the faces of these women irrespective of whether they are *Madigas* or *Holeyas*. But the living conditions of the *Madigas* look qualitatively very inferior. Their houses are very small and are a picture of destitution. Most of the house structures are not even completed. Most of the houses do not even have crude finishing for the floor. Majority of the houses do not have doors. On being questioned, one of the women said that there was not anything to steal. Very few seem to be educated people among the *Madigas*, while there are at least a handful of educated people among the *Holeyas* in the village. Among the *Holeyas*, there are at least a few families who own a considerable stretch of land. Many of their sons and daughters are doctors, engineers, lecturers, officers in various state government establishments, etc. Among the *Madigas*, at present a girl is doing her Pre-University course, and she, perhaps, is the most qualified among them. Even, politically, their representation seems very poor. All the three Dalit women *Panchayat*-members belong to the *Holeyas* subsect.<sup>4</sup> When

questioned, the chairperson of the *Panchayat* said, “We will not discriminate against them. We will fulfill their demands too.”<sup>5</sup>

But their cultural world seems to be markedly different from those of the others. In spite of the economic penury and social humiliation, a different kind of identity and space seem to be available for women there. Their cultural world has been able to accept different types of marriages, which sometimes are nowhere near the commonly prevalent marriage practices. Paramma is now aged nearly 65 to 70. Now she is old and full of wrinkles. In her prime, it was observed that she was quite good-looking and chubby in her cheeks. Somehow, none of the marriage alliances worked for her. Then she took a man from the next village as her lover and later, gave birth to two male children. After a few years, he left her behind and went his way. Then she started living with a man from her own village, and out of this relationship she gave birth to a girl and a boy. He passed away due to some illness. Then, again, she took another man into her life. Two children, a daughter and a son were born out of this relationship. She is very much a part of that village life. She visits everyone’s house and vice versa. Her children grew up in the company of other children. All her daughters are now married and settled in life. At the time of their marriage the groom’s relatives were even told who their father was. So is the life of Bhagi’s mother. With Bhagi in her arms, her mother returned to her parental village a widow. She was just fifteen at that time. After a few years, it was discovered that she had conceived again. The elders of the village came to know of it. They thought that she was very young and cannot spend her whole life and decided to marry her to the man with whom she had her love affair. There is also Deevi, who refused to live with the groom to whom her parents had got her married she had dissolved the marriage and had started living with her lover in the same village. The caste *Panchayat* decided in her favour and the second marriage was legalized.

Again, when it comes to working outside their houses, they seem to have access to comparatively liberal spaces working outside their homes is a very normal thing in their life-world. Women’s work is always respected there. Until very recently, the practice of bride-price was prevalent among them. An old lady,



while recollecting her own youth said that she was the only daughter in her family. There was no other earning member in her parental home. Therefore, at the time of her marriage the groom's people gave a milking cow to her parents as bride-price. It is true that very often necessity urges them to go out for work. Having been brought up in such a cultural environment without much exposure to other influences a mind-set has come about among the women of the older generation that working outside one's own home is natural. Because of this, even in families where it is not inevitable for women to go out for work, they do some work and earn money within their own homes and with the resources available there. In some well-off families, where the sons and daughters are doctors and professors, the mother continues to earn her pocket-money by churning out butter and selling butter-milk. In another family, an elderly woman collects cowdung and sells it either in the form of organic manure or by drying it with paddy husk and sells it as a form of fuel<sup>6</sup> within the village. Such practices are of course, slowly withering away and the younger generation is gradually getting absorbed into the regular and larger social framework around them. This is quite obviously visible. It is well-reflected in the attitudinal changes that have taken place among the younger women. Most of the younger women responded with a sneer about going out for working in others' fields, even though they were not inimical to working in their own fields which in fact they did occasionally. Even this kind of involvement is gradually fading away. This attitude is widely noticeable among young women in families where men are slightly more educated and have begun moving upwards affluence and are gradually planning to shift their homes to urban areas. It is also visible in the families who have settled in the village but have, over the years, grown more prosperous. In some slightly well-off families, girls are educated up to SSLC. These girls are ashamed of working in the fields and want white collared jobs. They prefer either to be teachers or clerks or else to stay at home. It is significant that now dowry has replaced the bride-price. Bride-price is no more being paid during marriages.

In spite of, these liberal spaces some of the Dalit world is still a part of the larger patriarchal world. Very often, liberal spaces which Dalit women enjoy are limited to the choices related to marriage,



divorce and remarriage. Otherwise, within the family, patriarchy and the subordination of women is akin to that in the society at large. Very often they are not the decision-makers. Their voice is the least heeded one. Almost all the major decisions within the family made by the male members. Though the son preference syndrome is not as acute as in the urban and sophisticated areas, such a prioritization is, nevertheless, there. Even though women in most families earn, very often they are not free to spend it as they like. Finances are controlled by their male counterparts. One of the women recounted how it was very difficult to contribute even Rs. 10/- to the self-help scheme though many of them earn money, and how they had to fight with their husbands even for that meagre sum. Usually, women take financial decisions in women-headed families, since there aren't any decision-making male members.

Wife beating is very common. An old woman aged around 75-said, "it is not just the husband who beats us, but very often the father-in-law and brothers-in-law do that." Another said that the sons beating their mothers is a very common thing among their families. We had gone to *Madigere* (*Madiga Street*). We were talking a middle-aged woman, standing in the courtyard. We noticed that the man who was her husband suggested to his wife through his gestures to stop talking and to go into the house. Immediately, the woman said, "I have to go, I have work." Similarly, Devi, who had left her first husband and had married the man of her choice, said that no day passed for her without being beaten by her husband and even her son. On being asked she said, "most of the men in the village do beat their wives, and wives have learnt to live with that." It is a common practice that if a *Sangha* (*Koota*) or a self-help group intends to talk to women, they have to seek permission from the caste *Sangha*, which has only male members, and women have no voice in it.<sup>7</sup>

Another noticeable phenomenon in Hosale is the marked difference in the educational levels of girls and boys. Even in the poorest families, girls are more educated than the boys. Mothers say that girls work at home and then regularly attend the classes but that the boys neither work at home nor add to the family income nor regularly attend classes. They loaf away in the village



the whole day. Most of them have taken to smoking and drinking. Very often, they are a burden to families where usually the mother is the only bread earner. Majority of the boys idle away their time and pester their mothers for money, and at times even beat them to extract money from them. Majority of the women were in tears while recounting their bitter experiences, with their sons, and they said they would have preferred to have daughters rather than sons. The son-preference syndrome does not seem to be widely prevalent even otherwise.

It is noteworthy that god and religion play a very marginal role in the day-to-day lives of these women. Except on special occasions like festivals, marriages or such other ceremonies, gods, prayers and rituals have very little space in their daily lives. In the course of our inter-action, they rarely took the name of god but only once, that too when one of them referred to the creation of caste hierarchy. The only theme, which repeatedly appeared in their talk, was their day-to-day problems of livelihood. None of them offer daily worship to any god nor light a lamp to god nor offer flowers. One of them said, "Nobody has ever prevented us from entering the temple, but somehow we rarely go there."

Most of these women do not use contraceptives. The village has neither a private medical practitioner nor a government primary health centre. Rarely do the people go to the doctor. Women felt that even if there was a doctor they could not afford to go to him because they don't have money to spend on such luxuries. They said that they have learnt to live with their suffering. These women aren't even capable of buying the most essential life-saving drugs. Their greatest question in life is about their livelihood which is being taken away from them day by day because of the politico-economic policies of the state.

Most of these women do not have any other engagements except domestic work. Those who go out and earn their livelihood rarely find time for any other activities. While those who do not go out have nothing to do once they finish their domestic work. They either watch television, if they own any, or go to some neighbour's house for it or else gossip with the women of their sort. Even women who work outside, do the same when they are free and have no work on hand.

Hosale village-*panchayat* constituency is reserved for women. A Dalit woman is the chairperson. Apart from her, there are two more dalit women as members. All the three women are illiterate and have the least exposure to the political scenario and the way it works. Those who are so bold when it comes to the question of their livelihood are totally diffident when it comes to asserting their political identity. The concept of empowering people at the grassroot is fine, but empowerment has a long way to go especially in the case of poor dalit women. Illiteracy on the one hand and poverty on the other are the two major hurdles. Illiteracy prevents them from knowing about and understanding the crucial information related to their constituency. Very often, it might result in fraud, misappropriation and mismanagement for which these dalit women who are least responsible are unfortunately held fully responsible. One of the members said,

Next time we don't wish to contest, because during the meetings there are quarrels and we are accused of misappropriation and such other things of which we are entirely ignorant. The secretary reads out every thing and then we sign or put our thumb impression. We don't know where things go wrong. Our husbands as well as our fathers are also illiterate and ignorant. Even they cannot be of any help.

Though they can fend for themselves unlike the other women, when it comes to politics they act within the larger framework in which the husbands or parents should help them to form a political identity to be successful in politics. Hence the question as to whether Dalit women can be seen as totally different from the other women still remains. It is quite obvious that the empowerment of Dalit women becomes impossible without the active role of the Governmental, quasi-governmental and other voluntary organisations in training these marginalized women.

In this bureaucratic set-up the system works in such a way that without money nothing can be done. One of the dalit women, a *Panchayat* member said, "A poor dalit woman cannot take up any of the construction work sanctioned to the village-*panchayat*



because she doesn't have money at her disposal. Without cash in hand none of these works can be accomplished because government funds flow only after the work is finished. Usually, we, dalit women, don't have so much ready cash with us nor can we avail ourselves of any loan because we have nothing to pledge to borrow money." The system of election in our country involves so much money that the poor can never contest elections. The president of the *panchayat* who is also a dalit woman said,

I don't want to be in the fray again because it is a matter of a lot of money. Even though it is a reserved seat, we have to pay money to all the members especially men. After elections, we have to arrange a feast and feed the people. Those who are literate make good this expenditure during their tenure because they handle the finances. We cannot do even that because of our illiteracy and ignorance.

Creating a political identity for oneself is very difficult for a woman in this system, but it is much more difficult for a dalit woman because of the way she is positioned in this society.

No movements either by women's groups or by Dalits nor any Non Government Organisation activities have ever even crossed this path. Most women know nothing about either Ambedkar or any women's groups fighting for the rights of women. Some asked if these women are fighting to get them adequate livelihood - two square meals a day? A cursory look at the issues taken up by the Dalit and the Women's movements in Karnataka drive home the fact that their agenda is entirely different and they have to go miles to even see the problems of these dalit women, let alone address or redress them. Hence, their question brings forth certain larger questions "whose movements are they, and fought for whose benefit?"<sup>8</sup> It also highlights the wide gap between the problems of the women at the bottom of the ladder, and those at the top who organise the movement.<sup>9</sup>

Empowerment can be broadly understood as enhancing the capabilities so as to enable women to take greater control over their lives and to transform their dependencies created by

subordination in to ensuring them greater autonomy. Though the notion of autonomy is extremely complex, it can still be defined as the extent to which women hold decision-making powers over their own lives and activities, comparable to the power men hold over theirs. Within the Dalit movement, the question of the empowerment of women is a non-issue. The women's movement does not seem to have grasped the overall problem of the rural Dalit women which is something more than patriarchy and gender as caste also defines their identities.

### NOTES

1. SCs constitute 16% of the population i.e, 147 million. 36% of them are workers, of which 48% are agricultural labourers. About 85% of the rural households during 1982 belonged according to NSS to 'landless and marginal farmer group.' This has increased to 86% between 1982-92. About 63.14% of the SC households are wage-labour households. Only 22% of the total SC population are marginal landholder, of which 70% have to work in others, fields as labourers to earn their livelihood. Quoted in Ghanshyam Shah, *Dalit Identity and Politics* (ed), (2001), Sage Publications, New Delhi.

2. Our family has no male support. No male members are there to look after the out side transactions. For everything we have to go out which is very difficult. We find it very difficult to manage.

3. It is interesting to note that they have a strange sense of pride about their own superiority in matters of cleanliness. One of the women told me, "Unlike the Lingayat women who just take head bath and enter into the house during the regular menstruation, we stay apart. We are not unclean like them." During important festivals and other auspicious occasions if their women who have to look after the domestic affairs are under the menstrual cycle, then they bring some women from outside and make them cook and offer it to family gods and goddesses. During menstruation their women are made to stay apart for three days. Only on the fourth day, they are allowed to enter into the kitchen and the *pooja* room. They have a notion



of purity and pollution that is different from those of the other castes.

4. Among the SCs, the *Madigas* constitute nearly 60 to 70%. Their representation in all the fields is less than 10%. Of the 33 SC legislators in Karnataka only 6 seats are held by the *Madigas*. Among the 6 or 7 SC ministers in the state only 1 is *Madiga*. Among the 60 dalit superintendent engineers, only 2 belong to *Madiga* community. Among the 50 Harijan doctors, only 3 are *Madigas*. These details are furnished by *Akhila Karnataka Madigara Horata Samiti*, Bangalore, 2000.

5. The major criticism against the women's movement was that a certain group of women speak for all, rendering other sections of women anonymous. As Prof. Gopal Guru points out here too a certain section of dalit women will be rendered anonymous.

6. It is prepared by mixing cowdung with paddy husk and drying it

7. Field work findings in villages like Muttur, Dadadahalli and Betalli testify to the fact that women are totally controlled by men. They are not allowed to go out unnecessarily. No domestic work is shared by men. Financial decision-making is never a woman's cup of tea. Very often the relatives of the wife are not entertained. Daughter's education is usually decided on by the father. An inter-action with an adolescent group in Betahalli corroborated these information further insisted that women should be like that and that is the right tradition.

8. Sometimes, looking from below, the protest of the women's organizations against various contraceptives and other dangerous drugs looks like a mockery because very few dalit women use them.

9. Prof. Ghanshyam Shah points out, "For the middle class dalits, the problems of new identity, and reservations are more important than the problems of poverty and exploitation. They struggle through literature, mass media, seminars and electoral politics. They form pressure groups to influence the policy of reservations and other related matters. But for the poor dalits who are small and landless labourers, artisans and *coolies* in

urban, unorganised sectors, poverty and exploitation are more important than the search for identity.” Quoted in Ghanshyam Shah *Dalit Identity and Politics*,(ed) (2001), Sage Publications, New Delhi.



## POLICY

### Selling Education to Save It

Sudha Sitaraman\*

Education not only seeks to reproduce the dominant ideas and power structures of every society, it also offers the possibility of questioning these ideals. However, this can be realized only through a continuous effort to understand the premises and problems of the existing system, and through struggles to redefine the structure and content of education.

Efforts of this nature have recently been initiated through a working coalition of mutually constituted aspects of complex structures, institutions, discourses, and practices at the national as well as the state level. I wish to call this enterprise 'educational developmentalism.' The new policy initiatives the site for the production of a new "global" discourse on educational governance-include: a national-level Report prepared by Mukesh Ambani along with Kumaramangalam Birla for the Prime Minister's council on Trade and Industry, in order to highlight the policy-framework for private investment in education; and *EduVision 2002 - Shaping Education in Karnataka, Goals and Strategies*, a document pertaining to the state of Karnataka published by the Government of Karnataka, in February 2002.

That there exists a crisis in higher education in the country requiring discursive and institutional restructuring is a cliché.

---

\* Doctoral Fellow, Institute for Social and Economic Change, Nagarabhavi, Bangalore

However, as I shall argue, the new narrative of 'educational developmentalism,' of saving education, proposes to recast the popular accounts regarding the improvement of 'quality' in education. This narrative is sustained by the parable of non-competing students and non-committed teachers who are unwilling to improve education, and it believes that the state of affairs could be corrected only through market-solutions. The key to those market-solutions, the story goes, is the privatization and commoditization of nearly every aspect of education.

'Educational developmentalism' maintains a separation between the 'educational' problems and the broader social-political-economic problems. Contrary to the neo-classical mythology, markets have to be created and regulated. Thus market-solutions solving educational crises depend upon bureaucratic (and not academic) interventions. Most importantly, markets for the supply-side of the educational channel require strengthening. They also depend upon methods for determining the monetary values of the various aspects and components of the educational system, by establishing of structures such as the NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council) that facilitate the certification of trans-border trade of the "commodities" in the educational channel. In short, this is an attempt to save education wherein saving is defined as not only compatible with, but dependent upon a market-led growth. I argue that if as the advocates of 'educational developmentalism' contend, education can be managed primarily by market means, then the existence of all gross inequities in the economy and in power-private-government colleges, urban-rural and rich-poor people, upper-lower castes, English-Kannada become relevant to the task of global educational management.

In a rare gesture of deep introspection, the Government of Karnataka has initiated a spectrum of changes in the educational system based on the understanding that the whole system of education has practically remained "stagnant," and "slow" to accommodate innovations in the "contents" and "processes" of education. The searching critique by the Government of Karnataka is represented in its document titled *EduVision: Shaping Education in Karnataka, Goals and Strategies*<sup>1</sup> which is a draft



strategy-paper essentially embodying the perspectives held by scholars and professionals who have conducted studies on the various sub-sectors of education in Karnataka. Characterizing the present scenario as stagnant and emphasising the need for change, *EduVision* claims to be a bold departure from tradition, "... advocating a wide range of reform measures to make the system vibrant and responsive to the changing socio-economic context as well as to meet the rising aspirations of the people in the era of liberalisation and globalisation" (2002: 4).

The document is essentially an invitation (placed now before the public for a debate) that outlines suggests ways of re-ordering the system of education in Karnataka. The seductive enchantment of its claims of transcendence has silenced all skeptics, and all questions stand stalled. It also loads every value on its own side as pro-civilisational, and reduces any of those possible resistances as 'pre-' or 'anti-civilisational.' What follows below is a critique of this document by a relatively new entrant into the profession, compelled to take the initiative for a dialogue, for the 'vision' has already assumed an aura of revolutionary innovation in itself. I should stress that in offering the following critique of what is heralded as "a proactive initiative," I do not intend to make a gratuitous show of academic ingenuity at the expense of what is still a well-intended effort at of scholarly enterprise. My concern is rather to criticise the dominant intellectual import that the document brings to bear on the strategies that it wishes to pursue. A critique of *EduVision* does not necessarily imply, nor is it aimed at, a total rejection of its obvious merits and advantages. In order to provide a critique, it is necessary to situate the document in the context of certain contemporary debates in the field of education both at the national and state levels.

The remainder of this article is in three parts. In the first, I shall attention to certain logical precedents that are set by the framework for higher education proposed by Ambani and Birla, which constitutes one of the main formative interventions in the area of reforms in education. Discussion of this initiative will enable us to situate the *EduVision* model. The second part reconstructs the 'strategies and goals' that *EduVision* foregrounds in shaping education in Karnataka. In the concluding section, I

offer certain general observations regarding the possible implications arising from the implementation of such a vision on Kannada language and identity.

## NATIONAL DEBATES ON EDUCATION

*EduVision's* response to the so-called "crisis in higher education" provides a new discursive and institutional framework that has larger implications for restructuring the character of knowledge, syllabi, and the pedagogical practices of education in the schools and college education of the state, though it needs to be understood in the larger context where changes are being effected at the national level.

That higher education in the country needs a major overhaul has been stated many times in the past. It is more than fifteen years ago that the National Policy on Education called for a series of radical initiatives in almost all aspects of higher education. Recognizing the need for intervention, in the recent past, the Government of India constituted a committee under the flag-bearers of the Indian industrial corporations, Ambani and Birla—the prime users of the "products of education" to draw up a policy framework for reforms in education, in lieu of inviting those who constitute the core of institutional relations in an educational system—the students and the teachers—thereby signalling the emergence of a new paradigm that drew an equation between the business enterprises and the educational institutions. The premise of this paradigm is that education can only be made sustainable by means of a privatization and commercialization of its components, which basically means the promise of ways to enable the system of education to pay its own way.

Based on a World Bank study of 1993, the committee recognizes that there is a strong correlation between high levels of education and economic growth, and recommends the need to invest liberally in education. Traditionally, investment in education was considered more of a social obligation, which the state had to fulfill. However, ever since economic reforms were introduced in India in the early nineties, resource allocation for higher education has consistently followed a downward trend.<sup>2</sup> With



the Government's ability to finance higher education reaching a saturation level, it is argued, there is not enough money even to maintain the existing system.

Further, in May 1997, the Indian Government's Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, issued a discussion paper entitled *Government Subsidies in India* in which it declared that higher education is a 'non-merit good.' Non-merit goods are not deemed worthy of government subsidy: as the discussion paper puts it, subsidies are advocated when the social benefits of a particular service or commodity are greater than the sum of private benefits to the consumers. In the case of non-merit goods, including higher education, it is argued that there are normally no significant differences between private and social valuations and, therefore, the benefits of any subsidies accrue more to individuals than to the general social good.<sup>3</sup> This has evidently major implications for the funding structures of higher education. The removal of "market distortions" created by state subsidies, the theory goes, will allow educational products to be exchanged for their actual price. For example, if the state stops giving subsidies, the educational system can be made more accountable with less wastage.

The conditions, thus, seem just perfect for private investors to make an appearance. The document argues that considering India's population, imparting primary education itself is turning out to be an expensive affair. However, the Government cannot ignore higher education. Towards this end, the report suggests that private funding is the only solution to the problems confronting higher education. Thus, it has been argued that the system of education can be made 'sustainable' not only by its compatibility with, but also by its dependence upon continued, worldwide, market-led economic growth. If it is true that sustainability can be managed primarily by private investment, then the existence of gross inequities in the economy and in power become relevant. The central tenet of the professed global educational paradigm is conceptualized separately from social, political, and cultural conflicts, and is sought to be managed without addressing international and local inequities; and separately from providing a rationalization for the continued pursuit of educational goals

without changes in the existing political structures and without the transfer of financial and material resources from the urban to the rural areas nearly everywhere.

Two significant related implications of the Report need to be highlighted: one, the argument for a market-based valuation of education implies that the foundation of arguments is in favour of the commercialization of education; two, by being named a non-merit good, education stands commodified. Apart from recommending education as a sector of high rates of return, the Report also claims that, “education is vital since those who compete best have an enormous advantage in the fast-paced market economy” (2000: 2).

At the heart of the new education-economic paradigm is the ideal of the world as a vast market place, in which all human interactions, and all social interactions can be understood as market-type exchanges, the cumulative effect of which is the most efficient possible distribution of goods, services, and information. Perfect markets require as-perfect-as possible information about the “true values” of the products of education: “Rates of return in education are also better than rates of return in other sectors such as agriculture, industry, and infrastructure. Since education is subsidized almost everywhere in the world, private returns to investment in education invariably exceed social rates of return.” (Ambani & Birla: 2000, 2). Thus, it would follow that the most efficient possible use of education requires the recognition of the “real prices” of its components. This, in turn, requires institutions and agreements such as those initiated by NAAC.<sup>4</sup>

The commodification of education entails firstly, the commoditization of the research-function of the centres of higher education, transforming scientific and engineering knowledge into commercially viable proprietary products that could be owned, bought and sold in the market. Secondly, it entails the commoditization of the educational function<sup>5</sup>, transforming courses into course-ware, and transforming instruction itself into commercially viable proprietary products that can be owned, bought and sold in the market. While the first kind of transformation makes the centres of higher learning a site of the production and sale of patents, and exclusive licenses, the second



has the potential to transform the site of production in to the chief market for copyrighted videos, course-ware, CD-ROMs, and web-sites.

## ***EDUVISION 2002***

The *Eduvision* document, reveals an urgency to recast the institutional structures on which the present system is based, and urges the Government to take a "...proactive role and create a system of stringent quality control mechanisms for the institutions...for the traditional role of *ad hoc* and incremental reforms will not do. The state has to make [*sic*] a big leap with a programme of total restructuring of the system to bring it on par with international format and standards" (*EduVision*: 2002, 47). The need, to reform and restructure, emerges from the analyses of empirical studies of various sub-sectors constituting the system of education in the state.<sup>6</sup> While *EduVision* is designed to shape the entire educational system in Karnataka, the effort in this paper shall remain restricted to those aspects that directly concern issues involved in collegiate education.<sup>7</sup>

*EduVision* expresses a belief that the current limitations of collegiate education are the consequences of certain very clearly identifiable features of the present educational structure, and that they can be altered through the establishment of an institutional arrangement which can function as an agent of change. However, the document nowhere makes clear what the "imbalances and incongruities in the prevailing system" (2002, 48) are. An understanding of the prevailing order is taken to be self-evident. Mere assertions, that the current systems of education do not meet the needs of the student, fail to note that different categories of students are likely to have different needs, and that these systems of education would not have served this long if they had not met any of the needs of any of the students. A blanket assertion of this kind, which condemns the traditional sub-sectors of education without providing any justification, has very little academic validity.

What is, however, stated is that the premises of *EduVision* is based on an understanding that, in general, "...higher education

has lacked a futuristic thrust and has been un-responsive to fast-paced changes occurring in the socio-economic scene as well as the global developments in different spheres of knowledge” (2002, 48). In formulating its strategies for change and reform, the document aims at transforming the “quality of education.” Here, too, the question of what constitutes ‘quality’ remains ambiguous. To achieve the goal of quality, the document proposes to effect fundamental changes in the methods of instruction incorporating such elements as the development of ‘thinking skills,’ ‘problem-based learning strategies,’ ‘use of projects and group work,’ ‘integration of IT’ into the activities of both students and teachers, attention to writing and communication skills of learners, use of libraries and other resources (2002: 48). These strategies are proposed with the intention to influence the institutions actually involved in the delivery of education so that they change and become more accountable to the people they serve. Towards this end, *EduVision* brings in a new language and terminology where in a of teacher becomes a ‘facilitator,’ a ‘manager’ of learning, a ‘class-room manager,’ and so on. Thus, there is no longer teacher-training but teacher ‘development,’ no student but ‘stake-holder.’

The document explicitly states that “(C)ontinuing to invest government funds for creating additional facilities on the other, is not desirable,” for this has resulted in “very poor quality” and in the “emergence of non-viable colleges” (2002, 49-50). However, the document is quick to point out that “(F)reedom for the market forces to operate should not become license [*sic*] for creating sub-standard facilities” (2002: 50). Thus, modernization and quality improvement would definitely require an upgradation of infrastructure in the institutions. Owing to constraints of funds, the Government has to articulate a policy on where and how to strategically spend on higher education. However, today, all the money is spent on the maintenance of these institutions and therefore, “(C)olleges should be encouraged to bear recurring costs mainly through private contributions from users and other sources” (2002, 54). All this is necessary to ensure that the students do not remain unemployable after completing their higher education. However, what drives these initiatives towards restructuring are



claims about the common interests of “humanity” on a global level that necessitate re-adjusting students to the “needs” of a “global knowledge-society.”

The need to bring about a restructuring in the system relates to the changes emerging from the compulsion to bring the students on par with international standards, foregrounding thereby the issue of the relevance and role of education. The document identifies the need to equip students to compete in the “global knowledge-society,” (2002, 47) where the real benchmark of progress in higher education lies in its comparability with national and international standards. It asks “(I)s the system of higher education in Karnataka comparable with global trends? Can it stand global competition in terms of the nature of programmes offered and the quality of the output produced? Seen from this angle, Karnataka is at the cross roads in shaping higher education system [*sic*]” (2002, 47).

One does not have to subscribe to full-blown post-structuralism to understand that built into the notion of the ‘global’ (superior) is an implicit and/or explicit contrast with the local (inferior), and that a positive definition rests on the negation or repression of something represented as antithetical to it. The local and the regional strengths are repressed at the cost of the global that is phantasmal. The global is not a mere representation ready to be unmasked by a handful of talented critics, it is rather a spatiality that is internally diverse.<sup>8</sup> The ability to move globally has become a synecdoche, a socially understood shorthand for general ability. As all individuals in the society are dislocated, no one is rooted and is, therefore, easily ‘movable.’ Because there is no such thing as authenticity, borrowing and copying do not signify a ‘lack’; instead it facilitates movement and mobility.

Underlying the assumption to render education global-friendly, including its aim at material and moral progress, is a project whose innumerable agents (students, teachers etc.,) are neither fully autonomous from nor fully conscious of it. Implicit in the pursuit of the global is the notion of an individual who is endowed with a consciousness through which one not only understands oneself, but also brings meaning into the world by inserting oneself into pre-existing structures. Thus, the document assumes that the

students are the same everywhere, and that all the choices that students make are guided by economic rationality. The question is, thus, to train students to match up to the “national and international standards.” Among the teachers, ‘training’ (for students as well as teachers) is a notion that few would dare despise. Indeed, on the contrary, all of us solemnly acknowledge its importance. But, what ought to be the kind of training shall depend upon the goals intended to be pursued.

These mechanistic ways of defining education are more likely to entail the familiar patterns of ‘command,’ ‘control’ and ‘precisely specified performance.’ In accordance with the hallmark industrial procurement principles of uniformity, standardization, modularization, and measurability, it seeks to bring in a model of education-as-a-machine, with standardized products and prescribed processes. The influence of such ‘extra-academic’ criteria on higher education is bound to reinforce and further extend the already accelerating extra-academic commercial tendencies towards training and de-professionalization. At the heart of this transformation is the Taylorisation of instructional labour in which the teaching-function is broken down into discrete components and assigned to different detail workers, a process described by Adam Smith at the dawn of industrial revolution, and perfected by Fredrik Taylor, the father of the so-called scientific management.

Mechanical devices retailed by the behaviourists, with gross indifference to the dynamic social reality surrounding the student, have become the principles of curriculum development. It does not, however, follow that the project to render education more global-friendly could be assumed to be driven by law-like forces whose ultimate success is inevitable, or that it could not be reformulated. It is rather the sign of our current confusion about education that one must be reminded of the obvious fact that education is a process for all parties involved, of becoming that it is based upon mutual recognition and validation; and that it centres upon the formation and evolution of identity where the chief determinant of quality-education is the establishment and enrichment of relationships between people—student and teacher, student and student—that aim at individual and collective self-



knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

Given the fact that there is a separation between educational problems and broader political-economic issues, the document provides justification for the continuous conceptualization and pursuit of educational goals in isolation from the development aims and from the changes in the existing political structures, distributions of economic power, and resource flows. Linkages based on social class, caste, place of residence, personal background, and the kind of school/college combine in a manner to reinforce each other. In this context, the role that language plays in shaping unequal opportunity, structures cannot be over-emphasized.

## KANNADA LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

The opposing worlds that the English and Kannada speakers inhabit, in our case, shows that English has increasingly become a language of social advantage and economic opportunities. “Competence in English is the single most important marker of a young person’s eligibility for negotiating the opportunity-structures that the modern economy has made available. Those who lack competence in English have remarkably limited [*sic*] scope for moving into higher income and higher status roles in society... A person whose skill in English is poor or non-existent has little chances that the general ability he might possess will be recognized and put to use” (1996, 59). A person’s skill in English, is thus, a composite indicator of several kinds of long-term advantages and psychological outcomes:

Most aided private colleges and private colleges use English as the medium of instruction. The psychological and material advantage that this accords seems to give shape to one’s social destiny. However, most of the colleges run by the Government, barring a few, use Kannada as the medium of instruction. Further, it is important to note that unlike the middle and upper classes who are capable of paying higher amounts as fees, and thus are able to send their children to elite English medium schools and colleges, the students who enter Government institutions come from the ‘lowest’ strata, and in most cases have a low caste status as well.

There is a general decline that becomes glaringly visible in terms of the infrastructure facilities, when one moves from a private to a Government college. Students attending private colleges and aided private colleges seem to enjoy a certain degree of confidence, which seems to be lacking in the Government college students. The division of college-going students into private and Government colleges on perceptible class/caste lines has had demoralizing effects on the teachers too. The teachers in the Government colleges are confronted with the predicament of constantly defending their competence in and their commitment to their profession. A striking difference between English-medium private colleges and Kannada medium Government colleges also becomes evident in the amount and quality of curricular material available to the students. The academic and other components of the culture of English medium colleges make English a conduit, which links the student with the “global,” and especially with the United State of America. In the social strata that are currently accumulating wealth and creating opportunities for higher income, English symbolizes a means to benefit from the globalized part of the Indian economy. The students, who are left behind in the peripheries of the global in the Government college hostels, in the slums in the cities and in the villages will have to cope with life on a drastic disadvantage. In the face of glaring evidence that English is the language of social advantage and exciting economic opportunism, the students of Government colleges who study through the medium of Kannada find in their lack of proficiency in English a source of low self-esteem. Briefly, it consists of a chronically unfair compulsion to participate in the global market economy from a weak position.

Although the discourse in *EduVision* has not declined opportunities to take advantage of romantic notions of ‘the local competing in the global market,’ it would be a mistake to see that the answers to the crisis in higher education lie in a mere assertion of the rights of the Government-college, Kannada-speaking poor students from the lower castes. As the Government college students evolve and interact with the world, beyond the ‘local,’ seeking wider markets, whether these processes lead to major diversities depends upon the terms on which they take place. The greater the political autonomy, access to information, and economic



self-reliance of the 'local,' the more likely it is that they will be able to influence these terms, and to adopt, adapt, and invent mixes of the old and new cultural forms. Nevertheless, by insisting on the local, it may be possible to re-politicise the current discourse on education.

## NOTES

1. *EduVision*, is a strategy paper shaping the goals of Education in Karnataka which is aimed at "enabling all the children (*Sic*) the state to become good human beings, productive and socially responsible citizens and achieving excellence." The strategy paper summarizes how education is critical in promoting the growth and development of the state's human resources and thereby accelerating economic development across sectors. Towards this end, the Government constituted a Special Task Force on Education, which has recommended several innovative policy initiatives, directed towards improving education. The State Government also intends to substantially increase investment in education through domestic as well external financing. An initiative was taken to provide a comprehensive overview of the sector from pre-primary to tertiary education, viewing the system of education as a holistic process. The sector report comprises of 9 sector-studies (encompassing various stages in the educational process), which provide a focussed, in-depth analysis of various sub-sectors, identify strengths and problem areas, set goals, suggest the strategic interventions required to achieve the objectives set. It intends to create a system of education that
  - guarantees equitable access to high-quality education, formal and non-formal, that would equip the people of the State with the knowledge and skills necessary for economic growth as well as for living in harmony in a diverse, pluralistic society;
  - is based on a world-class curriculum offering global knowledge and enabling the State to compete in an international knowledge-based economy;
  - is strongly built on people's participation, and institutional

structures which are accountable to the stake-holders and are constantly adapting themselves to the evolving field-realities; and

- is organised through strategic partnership between public and private initiatives both for efficient management and for mobilizing adequate financial resources.

2. Between 1989-90 and 1995-96, the share of higher education (as a percentage of the total expenditure on education by the Centre) declined from 32 to 22.5 per cent. Funds for higher education have declined (in relative terms) from 25 per cent in the fourth five-year plan to 7 per cent in the eighth. Between 1989-90 and 1994-95, annual plan (development) expenditure on higher education, in real terms, declined by about 15 per cent. The expenditure on scholarships in 1994-95 was one-third of that in 1989-90. The figures speak for themselves. Higher education does not figure prominently in the government's agenda.

3. In the document, the World Bank sets out the idea that "social rates of return on investments in primary and secondary education usually exceed the returns on higher education," and governments, particularly in the developing world, should allocate their limited resources accordingly. The World Bank, for instance, states that "higher education investments are important for economic growth"; and the logical conclusion of the World Bank's thinking is that "primary, secondary and higher education play complementary roles in national development." However, it may be pointed out that the assumptions underlying the 1997 discussion paper suggests that, because of the non-merit categorization, "a reduction in the number of recipients [of higher education] would not be harmful to the nation's interests" and that "a substantial increase in user prices is possible." Put baldly, if fees go up and the number of graduates goes down, this won't be detrimental to the society as a whole. However, this approach does not seem consistent with the current mantra of upgrading the skills of the workforce to cope with the global information economy.



4. NAAC is an autonomous institution set up by the University Grants Commission, which performs the role of accreditation of the various colleges and universities of higher learning, based on a scale of weightages. It has been made mandatory that all the colleges of higher learning and the universities in Karnataka have to be NAAC-accredited by December 2003. To do this NAAC has identified the following seven criteria in this regard. 1) Curricular aspects, 2) Teaching learning and evaluation, 3) Research consultancy and extension, 4) Infrastructure and learning resources, 5) Students support and progress, 6) Organisation and Management, and 7) Healthy practices. While identifying the criteria NAAC safely assumes that they are self-explanatory (NAAC: 2002, 3).

5. The commoditization of instruction is touted as the solution to the crisis engendered in higher education, ignoring the true sources of the financial debacle - an expensive and low-yielding commercial infrastructure and greatly expanded administrative costs; the champions of computer-based instruction focus their attention rather upon increasing the efficiencies of already overextended tasks of the teachers. And they ignore as well the fact that their high-tech remedies are bound only to compound the problem, increasing further, rather than reducing, the costs of higher education.

6. The document recognizes 9 sub-sectors, which include 1) Education and child Development, 2) Elementary education, 3) Secondary and PU Education, 4) Teacher Education, 5) Collegiate education, 6) Technical Education, 7) Education and Equity, 8) Structure and Function of Educational Management and Decentralisation, and 9) The Role of Private Sector in Education (*EduVision*: 2002, 70).

7. By collegiate education I mean the education which leads to the award of first undergraduate degrees in general education, such as B. A., B.Sc., B.Com., B.B.M., B.C.A., and B.H.M. Thus, the scope of collegiate education in this study does not include degree courses in a) law colleges, b) colleges of education, c) fine arts colleges and d) post-graduate degree courses within the general degree colleges.

8. However, while for good or ill, the notion of the “global”

informs innumerable intentions, practices, and discourses in systematic ways, this is not to say that there is an integrated global culture, or a fixed global identity, or a single global way of thinking to emulate.

9. The scientific management of people may thus spell out what is meant by commodification of education. To begin with “(A) commodity is something created, grown, produced, or manufactured for exchange on the market. There are, of course, some things which are bought and sold on the market which were not created for that purpose, such as labour and land...Most educational offerings, although divided into units of credit and exchanged for tuition, are fictitious commodities in that they are not created by the educator strictly with this purpose in mind...The commoditification of higher education, then, refers to the deliberate transformation of the educational process into commodity form, for the purpose of commercial transaction (Noble : 2002, 28).

## REFERENCES

### REPORTS

Ambani, Mukesh & Kumaramangalam Birla (2000) *A policy framework for reforms in education*. New Delhi. Prime Minister's Council on Trade and Industry.

*EduVision: Shaping Education in Karnataka, Goals and strategies*. (2002) Bangalore, Government of Karnataka.

*NAAC... a profile*. (2002) Bangalore. NAAC Bangalore.

### BOOKS

Kumar, Krishna (1996) *Learning from Conflict*. New Delhi. Oriental Longman.

Noble, David F (2002) “*Technology and the Commodification of Higher Education*,” *Monthly Review*. Vol. 53 (10), 26-40.



## TRANSLATION

# The Nature of Kannada Nationalism

D.R. Nagaraj\*

## I

Before me are two texts. The first is a work by Dr. M. Chidananda Murthy, *Kannada Samskruthi: Namma Hemme* (Kannada Culture: Our Pride). It was first published in 1987. The second is *Karnatakatvada Vikasa* (The Evolution of Kartanaka-ness), a work by Alura Venkatarao. This was first published in 1957. The aim of this essay is to review one of the important debates in Kannada culture, taking these two works as the central texts. To get the discussion going straight away, I give below representative extracts from the two works:

1.(a) O Kannada people, awake! Arise! Beware of the attempts by those who call themselves intellectuals and politicians to deceive us with words like universal brotherhood, India's unity, language fanaticism, etc. The Kannadiga has never been a language fanatic. He has never been a traitor to the nation. Have pride in your tradition. The region that does not protect its self-identity has no future. Let us have respect for our other-language brothers. But these other-language brothers are coming to Karnataka and turning it

---

\* He was a well known critique of Kannada literature, working as a faculty member in the department of Kannada, Bangalore University, Bangalore.

into their colony. If this is not stopped, Karnataka will be destroyed. The brave youth of Assam saved their region from destruction. The Kannada people have to prepare themselves for such a struggle.

(Dr. M. Chidananda Murthy, *Kannada Samskruthi: Namma Hemme*. 1989, p.25)

(b) The goodness of a person with self-esteem is different from the goodness of the weak. Karnataka has to use and digest the good elements from other cultures, while retaining its identity as it develops. Instead, if other people, their languages and arts encroach on his language, art, lifestyle, jobs, and push him to the background, he [the Kannadiga] will become a worthless being. When people of other regions come and praise Kannadigas for their generosity, the Kannadiga does himself great injustice by getting puffed up at this.

(*Kannada Samskruthi: Namma Hemme*, p.25)

2. (a) In short, we should not forget that Karnataka is a much broader entity than Kannada. Not only the speakers of dialects, we should also not forget the minorities who speak other (neighbouring) languages- in the construction of a united Karnataka this is a principle to be kept in mind. In other words, Kannada has the dominant status. But knowledge is welcome from all sides. As someone who keenly conducted the Karnataka movement, I never forgot this. Thus, once when the Marathi library in Dharwar was facing closure, I took it over, added the collection to my own Bharata Pustakalaya, ran it for some years and when the Marathis here came forward to manage it, I handed it over to them.

(Alura Venkatarao, *Karnatakatvada Vikasa*, 1980, p.148)

(b) For a country to be described as a happy one, the well-being of minorities is a more important criterion than the well-being of the majority.

(Alura Venkatarao's message on the occasion of Karnataka unification, 1956, *Karnatakatvada Vikasa*, p. xviii).

(c) *Karnatakatva* is like a focusing lens. Through it not only all of India, but the whole world becomes visible to us. The lens of *Karnatakatva* draws into itself the rays of the world and of India.

(*Karnatakatvada Vikasa*, p.199).



## II

Although at first glance these two texts appear to be dealing with the same aspiration, insofar as their central philosophies are concerned, they are worlds apart. Although they define Kannada culture and *Karnatakatva* in response to the same specific set of problems, it is clear that they are, in the end, very different from each other. Although they both seem to be speaking in the same register, the social vision is completely different in each. For convenience, Chidanandamurthy's concept of nationalism can be described as a "fear-centered nationalism." A dense fear surrounds his work and flows through it. The Kannadiga is being destroyed by others; the Kannada language is being wiped out by others—these fears are the life-source of Chidanandamurthy's philosophy. Even a purely internal reading of this work demonstrates this again and again. The logical end of fear-centred nationalism is aggressivity (*akramanaseelathe*). As the intolerance of otherness grows, this variety of thinking takes the view that the expulsion of the other is the sole solution to the problem.

Alura Venkatarao's Kannada nationalism takes birth on a different ground. Keeping in mind the other strands of thought in *Karnatakatvada Vikasa*, we could call it spiritual nationalism. Although it also begins with the view that Kannada and Karnataka are both in an endangered state, it creates for itself an entirely different ground for struggle. Just as Chidanandamurthy believes that Tamils and other language-speakers have done damage to Kannada, Alura Venkatarao had taken a similar stand vis-a-vis Marathi. Besides, historically, the threat from Marathi was far deeper and stronger than the "danger" that Tamil now poses to Kannada. For those who know the history of the Kannada *Navodaya*,<sup>1</sup> this requires no explanation. The thesis here is that Kannada faces a threat from the other. Alur's stand is such that even amidst the excitement of arousing Kannadaness and Karnataka-ness, he protects a Marathi library. In Chidanandamurthy's statement cited above, there is also a deep fear about the language and art of the other. To put it also differently, Alura Venkatarao's spiritual nationalism culminates in self-confidence.

Both speak of Kannada in extreme terms. Each term has its own kind of frenzy. In fact, Chidanandamurthy himself remembers Alura Venkatarao with respect. He also cites a few lines from *Karnataka Gatha Vaibhava* [Karnataka's Past Glory], published in 1917. But the important question is whether Chidanandamurthy's cultural vision is truly inspired by the integral vision of the arch-priest of Kannada (*Kannada kulapurohita*) Alura Venkatarao.

Such is the dynamic of history. The misapprehension of a paradigm/thought-form can result in historical progress or perversion/distortion. That is why history itself is a story of many misunderstandings. In the construction of history, a few of them are chosen, others are discarded. Only through a careful study of these admittances and separations can the secret of history be known.

Why such a contradiction? When Chidanandamurthy says "Those who call themselves intellectuals are deceiving us with words like universal brotherhood, India's unity, etc," the first to fall victim to these words is Alura Venkatarao himself!

It is one of the great curiosities of world knowledge that at different stages of historical time such paradigms appear uninvited and clash with one another. Perhaps the mode of thinking behind a work like *Kannada Samskruthi: Namma Hemme* finds it difficult to fully comprehend complexities of the philosophical foundation of a work like *Karnatakatvada Vikasa*. It is a state of mind caused by the fear of invasion. But *Karnatakatvada Vikasa* is a work that has the virtue of being aware of the possibility that the Kannada nationalism it propound carries the risk of being distorted at some stage in the future. It is imbued with the awareness that its vision could turn into a nightmare. That is to say, it is aware that the kind of thinking represented by *Kannada Samskruthi: Namma Hemme* could well emerge from its own womb, that it is in the nature of time to turn things upside down, to take things to extremes. Consider these words: "There is a risk that an excessive pride in Karnataka could induce in ignorant people a feeling of hatred towards other regions.... [that] *satvic* rejection [*bahishkara*] could turn into ignorant rejection (p. 176).



Henceforth, the effort to understand the basic form of this debate will have to be more subtle, more complex. Such an effort will also be an examination of the diverse emotional and intellectual worlds created by the modern western concept of nationalism in India and in Karnataka. The discussion which follows proceeds from the belief that these two texts, relating to Karnataka, are of great relevance and significance to the larger debate over the nature of nationalism as such.

### III

Nationalism is a construction from memory. The modern nation-state is an entity created by Europe over the last 200 to 300 years. Marxism primarily identifies the inspiration behind this nationalist ideology as the expression of the will of the bourgeois class. As a result, even if they take other dimensions into consideration, Marxists basically tend to render the interests of the bourgeoisie the focus of their analysis. Other social scientists have, of late, been focussing on religion and language as key concepts. Even here there is a division between real and imagined memories. Among Palestinians, the prevalence of both kinds of memory may be observed.

The important thing to notice here is the modes by which nationalism takes birth from the re-organisation of memories. In pre-modern societies, human beings have many-sided personalities. Caste, region, religious tradition, artistic tradition, material culture (*bhoulolika samskruthi*), relationship with nature- all these diverse aspects of subjectivity<sup>2</sup> blend to constitute the pre-modern individual. But with the rise of nationalism, for the first time, arises a hierarchy between primary and secondary subjectivities, leading to the constitution of a uni-dimensional subjectivity. An enormous process of selection and re-organisational of a community's memories on linguistic, religious and cultural planes, begins. Scattered memories, confined to many different and unrelated frameworks and systems are woven together according to a determinate formula. When old matters are rearranged in accordance with new meanings and aspirations, new forms are born. Old cultural and religious memories start serving new political



interests. Thus, all cultural identities in modern societies are based on re-organised memories. Such was the origin of Indian nationalism. Such was also the origin of Kannada nationalism. The struggles of the present need a subjectivity created out of memories of times past. There is no need here to dwell too much upon the difference between Indian nationalism and Kannada sub-nationalism. For, all sub-nationalisms contain the seed of future full-fledged nationalisms. Depending upon its relation with integral nationality, sub-nationality can throw off its “sub” status and march forward at any time. The history of the last decades of the twentieth century is the history of sub-nationalities becoming full-fledged nations. East Europe and the Soviet Union are not the sole instances of this. The Indian subcontinent and other Asian nations are undergoing a similar kind of transformation.

Against this background, we might say that all nationalisms come into being through a conscious effort. It is the creation of a determinate act of imagination. Memories must be carefully selected and assembled. Alura Venkatarao has a clear awareness of this modern, west-inspired practice. The following remarks of his have the figurative power and the mystery of an epic poem, the power of revealing historical truths in a flash: “As Columbus discovered America, I too had to search for and discover “Karnataka.” I discovered it through a long process of thinking and study”(p. 55).

There are some subtle dimensions to the way Venkatarao transforms a Western concept like nationalism. Needless to say, in the history of colonialism, there is an important place for such encounters and processes of transformation. Some significant insights in this regard can be found in the chapter on “Rashtreeyatvada meemamse” [The study of nationalism]. This was written in 1926-27. Here, he describes nationalism as a form of “satvic egotism” [*satvika ahankara*]. He also uses the metaphor of a river in this context. It is small to begin with, then gradually adds on “my wife,” children, my village, my region, my nation until, finally it conveys us into the ocean called *sarvabhutahita* [universal well-being]. But there is a difference between Indian nationalism and Western nationalism, according to Venkatarao. In the West, the fount of nationalism descends into self-interest. It does not flow into *sarvabhutahita*. This is the gist of his thinking.



Nevertheless, at the level of basic influences, Alur Venkatarao's Kannada nationalism too was beholden to a western-style nationalism. The process, referred to earlier, of receiving a basic form from the west and transforming it is in evidence here too. Venkatarao's distinction is that he organically conjoined to nationalism both the 'sva' [self] and *visva* [world] aspects of life. But the west clings on in the seductions of 'empire.' Those who live in the belly of an alien empire yearn for their own past 'empire's. Gandhi apart, Indian nationalists had a strong craze for such national imperialism [*samrajya rashtreeyathaya hucchu*]. For Kannada nationalism too, this idea of empire was a crucial wellspring. Besides, Kannadigas did not need to go far in search of this empire. Hampi was close by. So, what if it was in ruins? The dreams of that past glory could impart a glow of nostalgic grief to new ventures.

It is when we come to this vision of empire that we realise that Venkatarao's *Karnatakatvada Vikasa* has the feel [*sareera*] of an epic romance/romantic novel: "The 6th of May, 1905 was a turning point in my life," he writes. That day Vijayanagar was laid out in front of him, in all its sprawling concreteness. The impact of what he saw that day on his mind, was electric. "Just as electric light causes images to form on a cinema screen, a beautiful image of Karnataka Devi formed in my heart." From a semiotic perspective it is significant that the imagery employed here is drawn entirely from modern civilization.

The vision that he had on that day went on to acquire the form of a political project. However, for Venkatarao it is the spiritualisation of this historical vision that gives it legitimacy. He did not treat western concepts as impure and reject them. Nationalists, immersed in history, were moved by the ardour of sanctifying the impure. Gandhi was like that. Ramana, who considered history itself as impure, and the later Aurobindo, remained distant from such creativity. But that is another story. Later, Venkatarao himself would withdraw from politics.

But what appears legitimate in Venkatarao seems, for various reasons, to be a stubborn intolerance in Chidanandamurthy. Here too, as a great irony, the 'imperial vision' is pervasive. But the intellectual journey here diminishes Kannada culture and reduces

it to a wretched state. “Kannada culture begins to take shape in its specificity with a very small, but from the point of view of future consequences, extremely important event” says Chidanandamurthy, thus establishing the origins of Kannada culture. Where does he locate it? The Kadamba king Mayurasharma goes to Kanchi in Tamil Nadu, and is insulted by the Pallavas there. Chidanandamurthy elevates, what was perhaps no more than, a small wrestling match into a historic event. The mind is numbed by the thought that a culture that is equal to any other in all respects could have had its beginning in so trivial an occurrence. It goes without saying that such an explanation of the origins of a culture is absurd from a pedagogic perspective. Culture is a system that arises out of the irreversible blending of the ordinary rhythms of everyday life with extraordinary acts and events. That is why the idea of a culture includes things like the everyday meal, the *holige*<sup>3</sup> made on festival days, the evening’s game of *kabaddi*, the symbolism of Sankranti, *bayalata*,<sup>4</sup> tree worship etc. But Chidanandamurthy, one of our finest scholars, is so befogged by the fear of invasion by the other that he forgets all this. Although later in the same work he remarks, mildly, that “a culture means the way of life of a community,” in the crucial parts of the book, the author forgets this dictum entirely.

The determining concepts in *Kannada Samskruthi: Namma Hemme* are *kshatra* (valour/ might) and *swabhimana*, (self-esteem). Even Pampa and the vachana movement have been analysed on this basis. The idea of might is alien to Gandhian nationalism. These two words, *kshatra* and *swabhimana* are basically anti-Gandhian, Hindu nationalist weapons. For Hindu nationalists, *kshatra* is the highest ideal for an individual. This is a direct imitation of the European concepts of “warring communities, fatherlands [*samarasheela janaangala, gandu mettina bhoomiya*]. Gandhi never spoke the language of virile politics. He developed the image of *ardhanareeswara*.

At this stage, we come to a zone where certain hitherto unknown connections of the topic under discussion come into view: the idea of Kannada nationalism has, from the beginning, had an organic relation with Hindutwa or Hindu nationalism. There was a stage when, in India, nationalism as such was equated with Hindu



nationalism. There is mention of this intimate relation between Hindutwa and Kannada nationalism in Venkatarao's work also. But an important quality of Venkatarao is that he tries to conceal this Hindutwa through his other, broader and subtler concepts. In him, Hindutwa is just one form of specific existence, not the only one. Nevertheless, we can see even in Venkatarao this relationship between Kannada nationalism and Hindutva taking dangerous turns.

If, in Venkatarao, there is a clear reference to the relation between Kannada nationalism and Hindutwa, in Chidanandamurthy it has become an unconscious truth. Neither Venkatarao nor Chidanandamurthy mentions the contributions of non-Hindu communities to Kannada culture. Venkatarao's silence on this question is understandable since he believed that Kannada-ness was a spiritual journey on the path of Madhva philosophy. But the silence of Chidanandamurthy, who, when he discusses culture, uses several modern terms from cultural anthropology, raises many serious questions. After the pre-modern age, Karnataka has been shaped by Muslim and Christian currents. The contribution of Islamic and Christian sensibilities to the richness, power, and diversity of Kannada culture before the twentieth century was undoubtedly of the highest importance. In this context, we could cite a small, but extremely important, piece of evidence. Dr. M.S. Latthe has written an extremely interesting history of the folk poets of the seven districts of northern Karnataka. According to him, of the 240 folk poets of the 19th and 20th centuries, 24 were Muslims. After the Lingayats, who number 116, Muslims constitute the most numerous group. This is not merely a question of caste. This has to do with the depth of the interaction between the Islamic sensibility and the Kannada language. And since the 19th century, it was the Christians who rejuvenated Kannada culture on the educational plane. In fact, these two sensibilities had prepared us for the 20th century. Forget language and literature, a Karnataka that did not include the Islamic architecture of Bijapur, Gulbarga, Raichur, and Bidar would be nothing. It would be a ghostly Hindu image of itself. Similarly, without the Christian churches and the distinctive music of South Kanara, Karnataka would be only a weak, Hindutwa version of itself.



There are ideological reasons for the absence of any mention of these specific confluences in Chidanandamurthy. In his vision, Karnataka, stands frozen in the middle ages. The Karnataka that he dreams of belongs to the time of the Kadambas, the Hoysalas, and the Chalukyas. It participates in the ideological practice of defining the Vijayanagara empire in the language of Hindu imperialism. It begins with the stance that the decline of the Vijayanagara empire marks the twin destruction of Hindutwa and *Kannadatva*. As such, there is no place in *Kannada samskruthi: Namma hemme* for any mention of the modes by which Karnataka enters the modern age nor for the transformations that it undergoes.

Understanding this process is of extreme importance from the point of view of contemporary Karnataka. It is also the chief source of power of Kannada culture. This is what U. R. Ananthamurthy has described with his important concept of *jeernagni* [digestive fire]. I am in full agreement with him regarding the phenomenon indicated by this concept but I have reservations about the scope of its meaning. The question is whether that which comes from outside is digested in its entirety, without remainder or whether it continues to exist alongside. However, understood as a system in which elements from outside dissolve, this concept is entirely acceptable. In this light, the clear elaboration of a polycentric concept of Karnataka in Ananthamurthy's writing makes it an important document of Kannada nationalism. Hitherto, the debate about Kannada nationalism has only taken place in the language of cultural nationalism, moving in the direction of an explication of the originary forms of culture. The debate over cultural nationalism, Ananthamurthy's included, necessarily acquires an abstract character, because it is a question of the re-organisation of memories.

But Lankesh's thinking about Karnataka has given another distinctive dimension to this debate. Without employing the language of cultural nationalism, without venturing into the division and reorganisation of memories, he speaks from within a modern socio-political framework. Here the debate acquires immediate social and political utility and concreteness. His thinking takes off from the immediate perception that Karnataka includes many linguistic minorities and that the state's welfare is tied to their



welfare. A detailed discussion of Ananthamurthy's and Lankesh's thought is beyond the scope of the present text. I am here mainly concerned with the texts of Alura Venkatarao and Chidanandamurthy.

The main question that arises here is as to how to come to terms with the cultural nationalism called Karnataka. There are three models to choose from. One, to treat Karnataka itself as a separate entity, to see it as the sole, language-centred reality: a fear-centred nationalism. Chidanandamurthy's text is representative of this trend. Second, a stand that rejects the cultural reality of Karnataka and employs other, abstract, non-linguistic, non-cultural, modern political divisions such as class society, or administratively efficient divisions. Thirdly, the stand that Karnataka is a multi-faceted reality. Karnataka is a desirable expression of cultural nationalism. Karnataka is real. The whole world is being subject to an ugly homogenisation by the forces of modern capitalism. Karnatakaness is one of the legitimate forms of protest against it. It is a protest against the deformities [*vikatavitagana*] of western civilization. In Venkatarao, this protest begins, a language of spiritualism. Retaining its cultural nationalist form in Ananthamurthy, in Lankesh's thought it develops through the concepts of modern, secular socio-politics.

This stance is by no means a hollow universalism. Again, it is necessary to cite a remark by Venkatarao: "Some people may ask why, instead of getting into so much dense intellectualizing, we can't use the obvious, widely current ideas such as "*Jayabharata*, *Jaya bhudevi*" etc. To that our answer is, to do so would be too narrow from a spiritual perspective, and contrary to the tradition of *sanatan* culture" (p. 174).

To be universalist without being specific would be a falsity. Karnataka is facing a great crisis in every sphere-linguistic, cultural, economic, political [...]. But hatred of the other is not a solution to it. The language of militancy is inappropriate against it.

It is difficult to achieve universality by becoming specific. But it is the appropriate path to take, not only from the point of view of the health of contemporary political life, but also from the perspective of true human progress.

**Source:** D.R. Nagaraj, *Kathana Sahitya*, Heggodu: Akshara Prakashana, 1997.

Translated by M. Madhava Prasad.

### NOTES

1. A literary movement marked by romanticism, which flourished in the early decades of the twentieth century.
2. I have chosen “subjectivity” to translate *vyaktitva* rather than “personality”: *vyaktitva* is used frequently in this text and in some places “personality” seemed distinctly inappropriate.
3. A sweet made of dal, jaggery and coconut.
4. Folk theatre, staged in the open and usually based on stories from the epics.



## BOOK REVIEWS

*Imagining Unimaginable Communities: Political and Social Discourse in Modern Karnataka.* By K. Raghavendra Rao. Hampi: Prasaraṅga, Kannada University, Hampi, 2000. pp. xii+156. Paperback. Rs. 90/-

This book represents a pioneering effort from a senior scholar, Raghavendra Rao,<sup>1</sup> attempting to mark out the boundaries of one of the probable directions that *Karnataka Studies* as an academic agenda could pursue. It is an attempt to analyse the intersecting discursive fields of community-identity, nation-region and even universalism-particularism, through the writings of four 'influential' thinkers hailing from different regions of Karnataka who took active part during the late colonial period in framing popular modes of perceiving and inhabiting the grounds of what were yet-to-be- imagined communities of 'Kannada/Karnataka' and the 'Indian nation-(state).'

The problematic of *community and identities* has assumed exciting contours in the recent decades in the disciplines of social sciences. This book tries to bring some of the rather influential insights issuing from the works of Partha Chatterjee and Benedict Anderson to bear on an effort to understand the discursive fields of Kannada and Indian nationalism in the context of late colonial Karnataka. It is particularly welcome, for most of the academic works (located within the Kannada academia) on issues concerning Kannada identity and nationalism have failed to take note of and respond to such decisively influential works.<sup>2</sup>

Broadly locating itself within the analytical framework of Anderson and Chatterjee, this book seeks to discuss primarily the

founding moments of negotiation between the discourses of Indian nationalism and Kannada linguistic nationalism during the first half of the last century, but also, though peripherally, their moments of (temporary) resolution marked by the formation of the Indian nation and the Mysore/Karnataka state. A fleeting attempt is made, as a matter of conclusion, to examine the continuing bearings that such founding formulations and their resolutions have on the present moment. In short, this is an attempt to understand the historical process of imagining Karnataka as a discursive articulation as indeed of analysing that very articulation, and the tenuous but continuously negotiated/negotiating relationship it shares vis-à-vis the idea and discourse of Indian nationalism.

The book is organised around eight chapters apart from the bibliography. The first chapter delineates the “theoretical reflections” that inform the essay while the second chapter maps the “geo-historical setting” within which the four thinkers - Pandit Taranath, Hardekar Manjappa, Alur Venkat Rao and D V Gundappa – could be situated. A chapter each (three to six) is then devoted to outlining a selection from the “discursive writings” of one of the four thinkers. The seventh chapter offers concluding remarks and a short eighth chapter (all of two pages) seeks to juxtapose the contemporary moment vis-à-vis the four thinkers of the late-colonial period. The drift of the argument proposed in the book is better comprehended if one begins reading the book from the end - i.e., with the seventh chapter that is intended as the conclusion - for it is here that the reader even begins to sense the contours of the frame that structures the essay. Chapter seven should indeed have been the introductory chapter.

To begin with, the goal that KRR sets before himself is one of “understanding the nature and structure of the political discourse that dominated the intellectual history of modern Karnataka” (p. 1). He, at once, acknowledges that it is an impossibly ambitious task, and then moves towards zeroing in on a more restricted focus which will, nonetheless, be representative-enough of such a history. Thus, the objective is sought to be achieved by focussing on the “two major conceptual constructions” (p. 1) - viz., the socio-political imaginations of Karnataka as unified



cultural and geographical entity and of India as an independent nation (-state), each providing an “ideological basis” to both the *Karnataka Ekikarana Chaluvalli* (Karnataka Unification Movement) and the Indian freedom movement respectively. KRR believes that these two “imagined communities” and the movements they generated “pretty much exhausted the political history of the region from around the end of the nineteenth century to the first decade after the Independence of India in 1947” (p. 1).

But, obviously, there are active choices further to be made by KRR - of the historical period to focus on, of picking from the rich variety of thinkers who unmistakably have been influential in structuring the trajectory that history has taken, and finally, of choosing from the wide array of the texts that the chosen thinkers have produced. KRR decides to focus on the pre-independence decades of the twentieth century; for, he professes, it was during this period that “more sustained and more crystallised thinking on broader social, political and moral/religious themes [appears] to have taken place” (p.3) compared to the post-independence period. As far as the task of choosing individual thinkers was concerned, KRR decided to follow his “intuition” whose discretion was then padded up by “a scrutiny of an authoritative reference work and ... discussions with important figures in current literary and cultural life of Karnataka” (p. 7). Finally, texts were chosen with the belief that “a thinker’s overall thought is invariably built around a central problematic or a thematic leit-motif” (p. 7). The texts that are analysed through the course of the main body of the book are Taranath’s *Dharmasambhava*, Hardekar Manjappa’s *Bharateeyara Desabhakti*, Alur’s *Madhwa Siddhanta Praveshike* and *Karnatakatvada Vikasa*, and DVG’s *Mahabharathada Patragalu*, Baligondur Nambike, Rajyasastra, Rajyakutumba and Rajyangatatwagalu. All these choices that KRR makes— of the discourses, the period, the thinkers and the texts - and the protocols he sets in analysing them are open to contestation as are the justificatory grounds on which they are sought to be sustained, but their delineation will have to wait.

The argument the book hopes to make, in short, is this (one needs to rummage through the text repeatedly in order to arrive at a formulation of the central argument of the book, for, most often



than not, in spite of KRR's claim that much work has gone into making this book "more coherent and systematic," it remains disconcertingly argumentative, unconnected and incoherent): The colonial context (marked by its political as well as cultural "hegemony" (p. 9) over the colonised population), which "reflecting and intellectual" (p. 138) natives found themselves cast into during the first half of the last century, presented them with an urgent political and theoretical "inevitability" of imagining themselves as communities that were hitherto unimaginable - primarily, of themselves as a nation and as a linguistic community. The foregrounding of these two modes of perceiving and retrieving the 'self' was constituted at the expense of other self-identities.

Once the historical inevitability and immediacy forced them to privilege the imagination of these two communities over the other contending images of self-perception and self-retrieval, how do they go about the task of mapping out the contours of such discursive spaces and what are the intellectual resources they bank upon in negotiating with such task? They had, at their disposal (over which they had differentiated levels of competence), four traditions of thought, which they sought to deploy in their project of imagining the two unimaginable communities - India and Karnataka. They were: "1) ancient Indian material in Sanskrit, 2) Western material, mostly in English, 3) regional material in the regional language of Kannada, and 4) modern Indian material in English or the regional languages" (p. 146). They drew from these sources unevenly, depending upon the proficiency each one of them possessed over each of the tradition. Indeed, as a group of colonised intellectuals, they exhibited a high level of competence in regard to the first and third traditions, even as their expertise vis-à-vis the fourth was the most fragmentary, and relatively better regarding the third. However, their success in the project they undertook is beyond doubt.

The outline of the discourse that they mapped is the following. Even as they seek to replicate the nationalist thought that, according to Chatterjee, the Bengali context foregrounded - based constitutively on a sharp distinction between the 'inner' and 'outer' domains, with nationalism asserting itself in the inner spiritual-



cultural domain while conceding the superiority of the coloniser in the outer material realm of science, technology and politics - these four thinkers were clear that the distinctions ought not to remain mutually-exclusive separate worlds. They were alive to the fact that these two realms need to, and indeed did, negotiate with each other. Further, they were clear that *Sanatana Dharma* - which is not Hinduism, a religious entity, but “a Universal System of Morality” “which [thus] can be accepted by the followers of any other religion without sacrificing their otherness” - ought to become the guiding principle in the task of imagining India as a community, as it were. Another significant dimension of this thought is the fact that it makes a conceptual distinction between the nation and the nation-state in order to argue for a certain autonomy enabling democratic possibilities for the nation from its state-component which is necessarily coercive.

But the issue is also one of imagining a “regional community” – the Karnataka/Kannada community – that, they were very much aware, has to necessarily negotiate with the larger Indian community. Thus the need, though felt differently and to different degrees as individuals, was one of “[defining] themselves as Indians and ... simultaneously and relationally as Kannadigas” (p. 139). “By and large, theirs was a nationalist discourse that attempted to cut the nation to size by demanding that it accommodate dynamically its fragments in such a way that their identities were not gobbled up by an omnivorous category called the Indian nation. In short, this discourse sensed and articulated the reality of the nation not as an overarching identity but as a constantly re-negotiated and re-assembled relationship between the fragments, conceptualised in terms of linguistic-cultural- regional structures and the imagined community of the Indian nation” (p. 139).

KRR sees these thinkers as subaltern heroes, compelled so definitionally by their dominated state of being a colonised community to “[reflect] urgently and crucially” (p. 3) on their current state of political and cultural hegemonisation that “like birds which build their nests with whatever material lies in their reach” (p. 146) they reach out to every intellectual resource that is available before them in order to imagine what were hitherto alien communities of ‘self.’ The products of such a discursive enterprise,

even while drawing foundationally from the other available discourses on nationalism, were no mere replications. They were innovative and unique in responding to the particular locations from which they emanated. They not only saw nation and region as necessarily negotiable entities, they were even clear that they are not mutually exclusive communities.

This work is indeed important in attempting to map an intellectual history of late colonial Karnataka which is actively sensitive to the contemporary debates in social sciences regarding the problematic of nationalism in a colonial context - extending the existing formulations on certain occasions, rebutting on some. In particular, its warning that any demand from a 'fragment' need not necessarily fortify itself or even find making common cause with the fashionable post-modernist rejection of the 'universal' is particularly welcome in our contemporary moment of uncritical dismissals of all that claims a norm of universality for itself.

But there are far too many assumptions, needless turns of conceptual closure, limitations (or even active disinterest) vis-à-vis the task of 'going beyond' what is 'given' – whether in terms of the source material or that of the given academic common sense, unguarded acts of theoretical flourish and leap that stunt the prospects of the work in a rather congenital and chronic way.

The title itself is unnecessarily pompous in making a claim that the study cannot sustain. In terming the "communities" of India and Karnataka as "unimaginable," KRR is certain, the essay is only pointing to the fact that they were hitherto "alien" (p. 147) or, even more limitingly, "unknown" (p. 8) to "the discursive and non-discursive traditions to which the thinkers belonged [to]" (p. 8). Then why give such historical acts an appearance of impossibility? For all the perceptions of "lack" that the Kannadigas are supposed to entertain about their own self,<sup>3</sup> and indeed for all the contestations that the imagination of India as a nation-state contends with, they both are imagined communities, invested with a great capacity to influence the thought and action of the participants in such processes of imagination. Thus, "Imagining Unimagined Communities" could have been a more defensible and suitable title.



That, however, is the least of the complaints that one can legitimately entertain in regard to the essay. The most significant of its deficiencies, which acts as a constitutive element in debilitating the prospects of the essay, is the ‘limits’ that KRR sets for himself – in the realms of the sources that he decides to rest upon, the conceptual tools that he seeks to foreground, and, most definitely, the theoretical arena that he unquestioningly takes as his own.

The ‘frame,’ which the essay inhabits, is in fact a curious assortment of assumptions. A few elements from the trendy post-modern common sense – in particular, its distrust of universalisms (even as the essay resents going the whole way, it is aware that, “negotiated universalism” enables one in contending with the dominant “pseudo-universalism”) – and the unmistakable antipathy that the “subaltern studies” singularly reserves for the idea of the nation-state [that “empty and nebulous notion” (p. 2), that “omnivorous category called the Indian nation” (p. 139) with a will to enforce “a coercive unity” (p. 2) in order to “gobble up” (p. 139) the identities of its “fragments”] are added to what is unmistakably a contemporary middle class, even upper caste, common sense – in particular, the argument that was referred to earlier regarding the “crystallised thinking” having taken place during the pre-independence period than in the post-independence phase and the mourning of the “basic failure of intellectual life” (p. 4) marking the post-independence period in coming up with “discursively coherent” (p. 4) maps of intellectual traditions. It is this conceptual salad that informs the work<sup>4</sup> and one cannot even be certain that these claims are logically substantiated either conceptually or by the data that gets presented in the course of the essay.

Indeed some of the most interesting conceptual leads that KRR suggests suffer a constitutive lack of substantiation – in particular, his comments on the definitional ontological need for ‘universals,’ his observations on the need to retain distinctions between the concepts of nation and nation-state, and his remarks on Chatterjee’s perception of the problematic of community and capital.

All of the above leads one to take a closer look at the methodological moves that the essay makes all through its course.



The most visible problem is that of the modes of selection that it banks upon. The choices of the period, the thinkers as indeed their texts merely replicate the dominant and accepted modes of retrieving the colonial history of Karnataka, even as the rationale that is offered to explain the selection (both on grounds of material limitations of “resource constraints” (p. 7) and the lack of material or of conceptual frames of delimitation), remains academically very unsatisfactory; most crucially, his assumption that it was just the two communities – India and Kannada/Karnataka – “that pretty much exhausted” the political-discursive history of the region. Even a cursory acquaintance with the politics of the region during this ‘minefield’ of a period would have cured the author of such a blinkered vision. There were indeed many more ‘imaginable communities’ that were in the arena of contestation for dominance, if not hegemony, over the public sphere and imagination. The two communities of Kannada/Karnataka and India were not only negotiating with each other, but also with all the other contending imaginations of self.

For sure, KRR is not blind to this (see, for fleeting remarks of admittance, p. 8 and 139), but he chooses not to explore the implications such a realisation necessarily invokes. To take the most evident instance of a strong contender, caste was an identity that indeed fought to be a foundational imagined community during this period.<sup>5</sup> Looking at the trajectory of *Karnataka Ekikarana* Movement, the participation in the initial decades was largely restricted to the Brahmin community, as did the participation in the activities of the Mysore Congress, even as the Backward Communities harboured a genuine suspicion against the democratic possibilities of these two to be imagined communities.<sup>6</sup> It was only during the latter half of the 1930s that the backward communities decide to join the two movements, bringing along with them a new, hitherto unavailable political and mobilisational rigour. This leads one to the question of the selection of thinkers. Among the three Brahmins making up the list, two – Alur and DVG – had explicitly articulated positions against the democratic claims forwarded by the Backward Classes movement/articulation. Even Manjappa, a Lingayat, harboured no love for the Backward Class claims, and, in fact, was one of the



very few from the Lingayat community actively taking positions against the Backward Classes movement, much in contrast to the active espousal of the Backward Class cause advanced by the Lingayat community. Manjappa, again, was constitutively involved in legitimising his own version of Lingayatism, as against the upper caste Lingayats of his times who were questioning his very identity of being a Lingayath.<sup>7</sup> The point is not so much that KRR refuses to acknowledge caste as an equally legitimate community, but merely that caste does not even figure as a conceptual tool in the entire course of the study.

This, to reiterate, is only part of the package of erasure that the study unleashes. For instance, KRR equates, again without legitimate grounds of substantiation, the two communities of Kannada and Karnataka – i.e., in spite of the fact that, even within his own rather exclusivising selection of thinkers, DVG was till the very end not a votary of the unification of Karnataka, even as he was championing the cause of Kannada. Further, KRR never really attempts to critique the binarisms of the ‘coloniser-colonised’ and, consequently, of the ‘dominant-subaltern’ which leads him to uncritically lump the entire colonised population as an internally homogenised and unitarily purposeful ‘community,’<sup>8</sup> which evidently was not the case. Thus, ‘anybody’ from the colonised ‘community’ could well be a ‘sufficient representative’ of this supposedly homogenous community. But the colonised had different identities of self which forced them to perceive and respond to the apparently unifying condition of being colonised in different, and often contesting, modes. KRR states, “The historical experience of overfragmentation suffered by the Kannada people shaped their over-integrationist disposition towards the multiplicity of communal identities within the linguistic framework” (p. 139). Artificially binding them into such singular, non-existent unifying focus will bring no academic insights, even when it might serve rhetorical and political functions, for there were many actors – both as identities and even as individuals – with a highly differentiated spectrum of focus and politics, who were actively articulating their concerns during this period.

Further, KRR treats his ‘data’ rather unevenly. Each chapter has its own autonomous logic and compulsion (dictated largely by

the differential focus and emphasis each of the text chosen comes along with), till the very end defying any attempt to get stitched together. It only gets exacerbated by the author's rather strange assumption that the four "traditions" that lay before these thinkers were somehow retaining a life of their own and on their own. The problem, as he thinks, is not one of competence over them but of what does one use them for. There are no traditions to become 'proficient' about, but what use one puts them into is the constitutive determinant.

Finally, a word on the quality of production of the book: innumerable spelling and grammatical mistakes make it a tiresome read. Many footnotes are not properly numbered; sometimes they even go unmarked in the chapters, leaving the reader clueless as to their location. The citation is inconsistent throughout the work, even as the bibliography suffers the most of such inconsistency.

## NOTES

1. Here afterwards KRR.
2. See for a representation, Govindaraju:1998, Jayaprakash:2000. For an innovative exception, see Nair 1996. However, she is part of the English academic world, and the mutual exclusion that the worlds of Kannada and the English academia have imposed upon themselves is so near perfect that it is scary.
3. See Nair Op Cit.
4. To add to the disturbing eclecticism of the frame that structures the essay, the chapter seeking to "contextualise" the study remains a classic illustration of nationalist historiography, with all its, now well rehearsed, shortcomings!
5. This was but one of the contenders. For some insightful remarks on this period, see Tharakeshwar (2002).
6. See, for instance, the pitched battles staged between the Brahmins and the Lingayats on the pages of the weekly journal, *Mysore Star*, during the decades of the 1920s and 1930s as to which caste community has exhibited greater concern for protecting Kannada language and culture.



7. See Manjappa's autobiography (1966).
8. See pages 138-9 for an enunciation of such a position.

### REFERNCES

Govindaraju C.R. (1998) *Karnataka Ekikarana Chalavali Mathu Kannada Sahithya* (Kannada), Bangalore, SBS Publishers Distributors.

Jayaprakash, Banjagere (2000) *Kannada Rastriyate* (Kannada), Bangalore, Krantisiri Prakashana.

Manjappa, Hardekar (1966) "Kaleda Moovatthu Varshagala Nanna Kaanike" in G S Halappa (ed.), *Rashtradharma Drishtara Hardekar Manjappa*. Dharwad, Hardekar Manjappa Smaraka Granthamale.

Nair, Janaki (1996) "'Memories of Underdevelopment': The Identities of Language in Contemporary Karnataka", *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 1996.

Tharakeshwar, V B (2002) *Colonialism, Nationalism and the "Question of English" in Early Modern Kannada Literature*, Ph D thesis submitted to the University of Hyderabad.

**Ramesh Bayari**

Research Scholar

Department of Sociology

University of Hyderabad

Hyderabad.











## For the benefit of our contributors

1. Manuscripts are invariably, submitted in duplicate; they are typed in double space, on one side of the paper only. There shall be ample margins on all four sides. The affiliation and complete addresses of the contributors are furnished at the end of the article. We appreciate if the author could send papers through computer floppies (preferably in **Windows**). All correspondence is addressed to the Editor, Journal of Karnataka Studies, Kannada University - Hampi, Vidyaranya, Bellary District, Karnataka, India-583 276. Tel: 08394-441337 (Extn/322) / 08394-426229 ® Fax 08394-441334, E-mail: vijaythambanda@rediffmail.com
2. Each article is appended with detailed notes, typed in double space, numbered serially. The word limit for articles is 10,000 words. For review articles and policy analysis the word limit is 4,000 words.
3. References should be typed in double space at the end of article; Citations should appear alphabetically (Ansari 1996, 121; Oomen 1994, 24; Satyam 1997, 234) Multiple citations for the same author are distinguished (Narayan:1991a, 34; 1991b, 23).

### Style of reference is as follows:

#### a. Books

Sarkar, Sumit (1997). Writing Social History. New Delhi, Oxford University Press

#### b. Edited Volumes

Kohli Atul (2001). ed., The Success of India's Democracy. New Delhi, Cambridge University Press

#### c. Articles in edited Volumes

Zydenbos, Robert J (1994) Jaina Goddesses in Kannada literature, in Entwistle Alan W and Malliso Francoise (eds), Studies in South Asia Devotional Literature. New Delhi, Manohar.

#### d. Articles in Journals

Bhargava Rajeev (October 1990), "The Right to Culture," Social Scientist. 18 (10): 50-57

#### e. Unpublished Works

Vivekanandha S.N. (2000). Colonialism and Nationalism in Karnataka. Unpublished Ph. D thesis, Kannada University.

4. Primary Source citations include town, location and private collection.
5. Only British and not American, Spellings are used (for example "Programme")
6. Double Quotes are used. Single quote is used for quotes within quotations
7. Figures and tables are on separate sheets of paper and numbered.
8. Titles are, as far as possible, short and crisp. Copyright Permission for figures and photographs from other published works
9. Diacritical marks must be consistent.
10. All articles are subject to review by the designated referees.



Kannada University, Hampi, One of the premier institutions of research in India, proposes to address a long felt, unspelt academic need by launching a bi-annual Cultural Studies journal in English entitled **Journal of Karnataka Studies**: lack of access to available research on the varied aspects of studies on Kannada and Karnataka as well as a fruitful interaction among scholars in the field has often been noticed by the engaged academic community as an embarrassing lacuna. Journal of Karnataka Studies hopes to be a forum for Kannada and Karnataka Studies so as to encourage and enrich interactive research and scholarship among scholars and students of Kannada/ Karnataka Studies working in Kannada, English and the other languages; the Journal wishes to orchestrate the variety of notes into a polyphony by addressing issues and debates relating to Kannada/Karnataka-its economy, polity, natural resources, environment, media, nationalism,. history, language, culture and other similar issues.

Journal of Karnataka Studies will carry research articles in each issue. In addition, it would have a section devoted to varieties of documentation: reprints and /or translations of major writings from the past, excerpts from crucial policy documents and debates in the media or other forums, articles from Kannada journals, etc. Another section of Journal will review important studies on Karnataka, works in regional studies and methodology. Commissioned essays on contemporary events, preoccupations and debates will feature as a separate section. An exclusive section to highlight the conceptual and theoretical achievements of writings in Kannada will make a specific effort towards developing an autonomous and relevant research methodology for Kannada/ Karnataka studies. Each issue of the Journal will bring to focus, among other things, a specific theme; the first issue of the Journal is centered primarily around the theme of "Kannada Identity."



PRASARANGA

KANNADA UNIVERSITY, HAMPI